



R. White delin. et sculp.

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 Archiepiscopus CANTUARIENSIS totius Angliæ Primas et Metropolitanus
 Reverendissimis Principibus Regi GULIELMO et Reginae MARIE à Secretioribus Consiliis*

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THE
WORKS

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. John Tillotson,

L A T E



Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY:

CONTAINING

Fifty Four Sermons and Discourses,

On SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

Together with

The RULE of FAITH.

B E I N G

ALL that were Published by his GRACE Himself,
And now Collected into *One Volume*.

To which is Added,
An Alphabetical TABLE *of the Principal Matters.*

The Sixth Edition.

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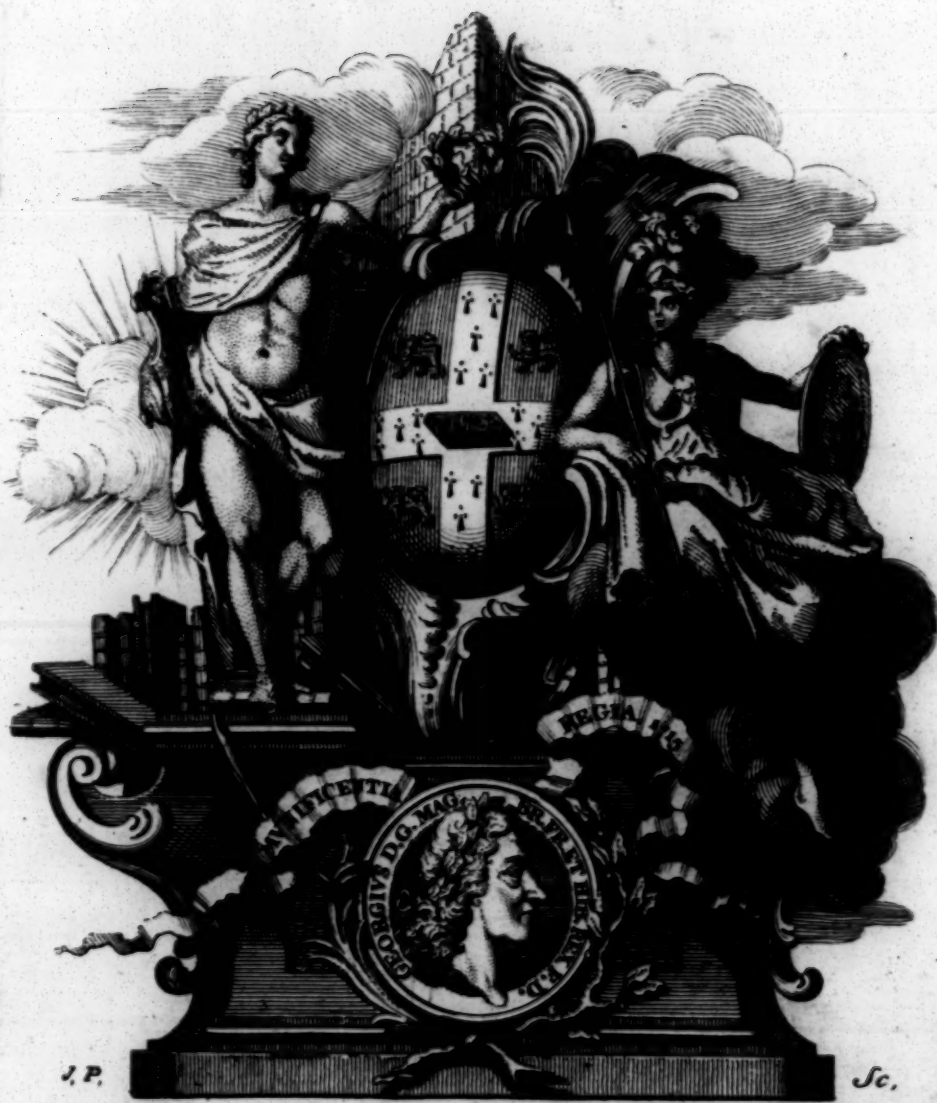
L O N D O N :

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Middle-Temple-Gate in *Fleetstreet*. MDCCX.

THE
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The Fifth Edition.

1755

Printed for W. R. & A. at the Star, and T. Goodwin at
the Green-Lane, over-against St. Dunstons Church in Fleet-
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To the Worshipful
The M A S T E R S of the B E N C H,
And the rest of the
M E M B E R S
O F T H E
Honourable Society of Lincolns-Inn.

G E N T L E M E N,

WHEN I resolv'd to publish these Sermons, there could be no dispute to whom I should dedicate them. They do of right belong to you, being most of them first preach'd among you; besides my great obligation to you for your constant respects to me, both in the favourable acceptance, and in the generous encouragement of my labours, ever since I had the honour and happiness to be related to you. In a thankful acknowledgment whereof I humbly present this small part of them to you, hoping that by the blessing of God they may be of some use for the promoting of true piety and virtue, which is the sincere wish and aim of

Your most obliged

and faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

A

T H E

T H E

P R E F A C E.

I Shall neither trouble the Reader, nor my self, with any Apology for the publishing of these Sermons. For if they be in any measure truly serviceable to the end for which they are design'd, to establish men in the Principles of Religion, and to recommend to them the practice of it with any considerable advantage, I do not see what Apology is necessary; and if they be not so, I am sure none can be sufficient. However if there need any, the common heads of excuse in these cases are very well known; and I hope I have an equal right to them with other men.

I shall chuse rather in this Preface, to give a short account of the following Discourses, and as briefly as I can to vindicate a single passage in the first of them from the Exceptions of a Gentleman who hath been pleas'd to honour it so far as to write a whole Book against it.

The Design of these Discourses is fourfold.

First, To shew the unreasonableness of Atheism, and of scoffing at Religion; which I am sorry is so necessary to be done in this Age. This I have endeavour'd in the two first of these Discourses.

Secondly, To recommend Religion to men from the great and manifold advantages which it brings both to publick Society and to particular Persons. And this is the argument of the third and fourth.

Thirdly, To represent the excellency, more particularly, of the Christian Religion; and to vindicate the practice of it from the suspicion of those grievous troubles and difficulties which many imagine it to be attended withal. And this is the subject of the fifth and sixth.

Fourthly, To persuade men to the practice of this holy Religion, from the great obligation which the profession of Christianity lays upon men to that purpose; and more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life; which is the design of the two last Discourses.

Having given this short account of the following Discourses, I crave leave of the Reader to detain him a little longer, whilst I vindicate a passage in the first of these Sermons, from the assaults of a whole Book purposely writ against it. The Title of the Book is Faith vindicated from the possibility of Falshood. The Author Mr. J. S. the famous Author of Sure-footing. He hath indeed in this last Book of his, to my great amazement, quitted that glorious Title. Not that I dare assume to my self to have put him out of conceit with it, by having convinc'd him of the fantasticalness of it. No, I despair to convince that man of any thing, who after so fair an admonition does still persist to maintain, * That first and self-evident Principles not only may, but are fit to be de-

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† Ibid. p. 11. *monstrated; and † that those ridiculous identical Propositions, that Faith is Faith, and a Rule is a Rule, are first Principles in this Controversy of the Rule of Faith, without which nothing can be solidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. But there was another reason for his quitting of that Title, and a prudent one indeed: He hath forsaken the defence of Sure-footing, and then it became convenient to lay aside that Title, for fear of putting people any more in mind of that Book.*

* P. 14. *I expected indeed after his Letter of Thanks, in which he * tells us, he intended to throw aside the rubbish of my Book, that in his Answer he might the better lay open the Fabrick of my Discourse, and have nothing there to do, but to speak to solid Points; I say, after this, I expected a full Answer to the solid Points (as he is pleased to call them) of my Book; and that, (according to his excellent method of removing the rubbish, in order to the pulling down of a building) the Fabrick of my Book would long since have been demolish'd and laid even with the ground. But especially, when in the conclusion of that most civil and obliging Letter, he threatn'd never to leave following on his blow, till he had either brought Dr. Still. and me to lay Principles that would bear the test, or it was made evident to all the world that we had none: I began (as I had reason) to be in a terrible fear of him, and to look upon my self as a dead man. And indeed who can think himself so considerable as not to dread this mighty man of Demonstration, this Prince of Controvertists, this great Lord and Professor of First Principles? But I perceive that great minds are merciful, and do sometimes content themselves to threaten when they could destroy.*

* P. 13. *For instead of returning a full Answer to my Book, he (according to their new mode of confuting Books) manfully falls a nibbling at one single passage in it, pag. 118. wherein he makes me to say (for I say no such thing) that the Rule of Christian Faith, and consequently Faith it self, is possible to be false. Nay in his Letter of Thanks, * he says it is an avow'd Position, in that place, that Faith is possible to be false. And to give the more countenance to this calumny, he chargeth the same Position (in equivalent terms) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity, upon the forementioned Sermon. But because he knew in his conscience, that I had avow'd no such Position, he durst not cite the words either of my Book or Sermon, lest the Reader should have discover'd the notorious falshood and groundlesness of this Calumny: Nay he durst not so much as refer to any particular place in my Sermon, where such a passage might be found. And yet this is the Man that has the face to charge others with false citations, to which charge, before I have done, I shall say something, which (what effect soever it may have upon him) would make any other man sufficiently asham'd.*

But yet I must acknowledge, that in this Position which he fastens upon me, he honours me with excellent company, my Lord Faulkland, Mr. Chillingworth, and Dr. Stillingfleet; Persons of that admirable strength and clearness in their Writings, that Mr. S. when he reflects upon his own style and way of reasoning, may blush to acknowledge that ever he has read them. And as to this Position which he charges them withal, I do not know (nor have the least reason upon Mr. S's word to believe) any such thing is maintained by them.

As for my self, whom I am now only concern'd to vindicate, I shall set down the two Passages, to which I suppose he refers.

In my Sermon, I endeavour (among other things) to shew the unreasonableness of Atheism upon this account: . Because it requires more evidence for things

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things than they are capable of. *To make this good, I discourse thus: Aristotle hath long since observed, how unreasonable it is to expect the same kind of Proof for every thing, which we have for some things. Mathematical things being of an abstracted nature, are only capable of clear Demonstration. But Conclusions in Natural Philosophy, are to be prov'd by a sufficient Induction of experiments; things of a Moral nature, by Moral Arguments, and Matters of Fact by credible Testimony. And though none of these be strict Demonstration, yet have we an undoubted assurance of them, when they are prov'd by the best Arguments that the nature and quality of the thing will bear. None can demonstrate to me, that there is such an Island in America as Jamaica; yet upon the Testimony of credible persons, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the clearest Mathematical Demonstration. So that this is to be entertain'd as a firm Principle, by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is, as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing. Now to apply this to the present case. The Being of God is not Mathematically demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should; because only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be prov'd immediately by sense, because God being suppos'd to be a pure Spirit, cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be prov'd is capable of, and as we could in reason expect to have, supposing that he were.*

Upon this passage it must be (if any thing in the Sermon) that Mr. S. chargeth this Position (in equivalent terms) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity. And now I appeal to the Reader's Eyes and Judgment, whether the sum of what I have said, be not this, That though the existence of God be not capable of that strict kind of Demonstration which Mathematical matters are, yet, that we have an undoubted assurance of it. One would think that no man could be so ridiculous as from hence to infer, that I believe it possible, notwithstanding this assurance, that there should be no God. For however in many other cases an undoubted assurance that a thing is, may not exclude all suspicion of a possibility of its being otherwise; yet in this Tenet of a Deity it most certainly does. Because whoever is assur'd that there is a God, is assur'd there is a Being whose existence is and always was necessary, and consequently is assured that it is impossible he should not be, and involves in it a contradiction. So that my Discourse is so far from being equivalent to the Position he mentions, that it is a perfect contradiction to it. And he might with as much truth have affirm'd, that I had expressly, and in so many words said that there is no God.

The other passage is in pag. 118. of my Book, concerning the Rule of Faith. I was discoursing that no man can shew by any necessary argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the Relations concerning America should be false. But yet (say I) I suppose that notwithstanding this, no man in his wits is now possess'd with so incredible a folly, as to doubt whether there be such a place. The case is the very same as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the sense of plain expressions: We have no demonstration for these things, and we expect none; because we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is so ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by him whose Name it bears; or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it; it

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is possible all this may be otherwise : But we are very well assur'd that it is not, nor hath any prudent man any just cause to make the least doubt of it ; For a bare possibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no just cause of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is possible all the people in *France* may die this night, but I hope the possibility of this doth not incline any man in the least to think it will be so. It is possible that the Sun may not rise to morrow morning ; yet for all this I suppose that no man hath the least doubt but that it will.

To avoid the cavils of this impertinent Man, I have transcrib'd the whole Page to which he refers. And now where is this avow'd Position of the possible falshood of Faith ? All that I say is this, That we are not infallible either in judging of the antiquity of a Book, or of the sense of it ; by which I mean (as any man of sense and ingenuity would easily perceive I do) that we cannot demonstrate these things so, as to shew that the contrary necessarily involves a contradiction ; but yet that we may have a firm assurance concerning these matters, so as not to make the least doubt of them.

And is this to avow the possible falshood of Faith ? And yet this Position Mr. S. charges upon these words ; how justly I shall now examine.

Either by Faith Mr. S. means the Doctrine revealed by God, and then the meaning of the Position must be, that what God says, is possible to be false ; which is so absurd a Position as can hardly enter into any man's Mind ; and yet Mr. S. has the modesty all along in his Book to insinuate that in the fore-cited Passage I say as much as this comes to.

Or else Mr. S. means by Faith, the assent which we give to Doctrines as reveal'd by God ; and then his sense of infallibility must be either, that whoever assents to any thing as revealed by God, cannot be deceiv'd, upon supposition that it is so reveal'd ; or else absolutely, that whoever assents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd. Now altho' I do not, in the Passage forecited, speak one syllable concerning Doctrines reveal'd by God, yet I affirm (and so will any man else) that an assent to any Doctrine as revealed by God, if it be revealed by him, is impossible to be false. But this is only an infallibility upon supposition, which amounts to no more than this, That if a thing be true, it is impossible to be false. And yet the principal design of Mr. S's Book is to prove this, which I believe no Man in the World was ever so senseless as to deny. But if he mean absolutely, that whoever assents to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, that is, that no man can be mistaken about matters of Faith (as he must mean, if he pretend to have any adversary, and do not fight only with his own shadow) this I confess is a very comfortable assertion, but I am much afraid it is not true.

Or else, lastly, By Faith he understands the Means and Motives of Faith. And then the plain state of the controversy between us is this, Whether it be necessary to a Christian belief to be infallibly secur'd of the means whereby the Christian Doctrine is convey'd to us, and of the firmness of the Motives upon which our belief of it is grounded. This indeed is something to the purpose ; for tho' in the passage before-cited, I say not one word concerning the Motives of our Belief of the Christian Doctrine, yet my Discourse there was intended to be apply'd to the means whereby the knowledge of this Doctrine is convey'd to us. However, I am contented to joyn issue with Mr. S. upon both these Points.

I. That it is not necessary to the true nature of Faith, that the Motives upon which any man believes the Christian Doctrine should be absolutely conclusive, and impossible to be false. That it is necessary, Mr. S. several times affirms in his Book ;

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Book; but how unreasonably, appears from certain and daily experience. Very many Christians (such as St. Austin speaks of, as sav'd not by the quickness of their understandings, but the simplicity of their belief) do believe the Christian Doctrine upon incompetent grounds, and their belief is true, though the argument upon which they ground it be not (as Mr. S. says) absolutely conclusive of the thing: And he that thus believes the Christian Doctrine, if he adhere to it, and live accordingly, shall undoubtedly be sav'd; and yet I hope Mr. S. will not say that any man shall be saved without true Faith. I might add, that in this Assertion Mr. S. is plainly contradicted by those of his own Church.

For they generally grant, that General Councils, though they be infallible in their Definitions and Conclusions, yet are not always so in their Arguments and reasonings about them. And the Guide of Controversies * expressly says, * P. 35. that it is not necessary that a Divine Faith should always have an external rationally infallible ground or motive thereto (whether Church-Authority, or any other) on his part, that so believes. Here is a man of their own Church avowing this Position, That Faith is possible to be false. I desire Mr. S. who is the very Rule of Controversy, to do justice upon this false Guide.

I must acknowledge that Mr. S. attempts to prove this Assertion, and that by a very pleasant and surprizing Argument, which is this. The profound Mysteries of Faith (he tells us†) must needs seem to some, (viz. those who have no light but their pure natural Reason, * as he said before) impossible to be true; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature seemingly impossible to be false can conquer so as to make them conceit them really true. What Mr. S. here means by a Motive of its own nature seeming impossible to be false, I cannot divine, unless he means a real seeming impossibility. But be that as it will; does Mr. S. in good earnest believe that a Motive of its own nature seeming impossible to be false, is sufficient to convince any man, that has and uses the light of natural Reason, of the truth of a thing which must needs seem to him impossible to be true? In my opinion these two seeming impossibilities are so equally matched, that it must needs be a drawn Battel between them. Suppose the thing to be believed be Transubstantiation; this indeed is a very profound Mystery, and is (to speak in Mr. S's phrase) of its own nature so seemingly impossible, that I know no argument in the world strong enough to cope with it. And I challenge Mr. S. to instance in any Motive of Faith which is, both to our understanding and our senses, more plainly impossible to be false than their Doctrine of Transubstantiation is evidently impossible to be true. And if he cannot; how can he reasonably expect that any man in the World should believe it?

2. That it is not necessary to the true nature of Faith, that we should be infallibly secur'd of the means whereby the Christian Doctrine is convey'd to us; particularly of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and that the expressions in it cannot possibly bear any other sense. And these are the very things I instance in, in the passage so often mention'd. And to these Mr. S. ought to have spoken, if he intended to have confuted that passage. But he was resolv'd not to speak distinctly, knowing his best play to be in the dark, and that all his safety lay in the confusion and obscurity of his talk.

Now that to have an infallible security in these particulars is not necessary to the true nature of Faith, is evident upon these two accounts; because Faith may be without this infallible security, and because in the particulars mention'd it is impossible to be had.

1. Because

† Faith.
vind. p.
90.
* P. 89.

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1. *Because Faith may be without this infallible security. He that is so assur'd of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and of the sense of those Texts wherein the Doctrines of Christianity are plainly delivered, as to see no just cause to doubt thereof, may really assent to those Doctrines, though he have no infallible security. And an assent so grounded I affirm to have the true nature of Faith. For what degree of assent, and what security of the Means, which convey to us the knowledge of Christianity, are necessary to the true nature of Faith, is to be estimated from the end of Faith, which is the salvation of men's souls. And whoever is so assur'd of the authority and sense of Scripture, as to believe the doctrine of it, and to live accordingly, shall be sav'd. And surely such a belief as will save a man hath the true nature of Faith, though it be not infallible. And if God have sufficiently provided for the salvation of men of all capacities, it is no such reflection upon the goodness and wisdom of providence, as Mr. S. imagines, that he hath not taken care that every man's Faith should arrive to the degree of infallibility; nor does our Blessed Saviour, for not having made this provision, deserve to be esteem'd by all the world not a wise Lawgiver, but a mere Ignoramus and Impostor, as * one of his fellow Controvertists speaks with reverence.*

* Labyrinthus Cantuariensis, p. 77.

Besides this assertion that infallibility is necessary to the true nature of that assent which we call Faith, is plainly false upon another account also; because Faith admits of degrees. But infallibility has none. The Scripture speaks of a weak and a strong Faith, and of the increase of Faith; but I never heard of a weak and strong Infallibility. Infallibility is the highest perfection of the knowing faculty, and consequently the firmest degree of assent upon the firmest grounds, and which are known to be so. But will Mr. S. say, that the highest degree of assent admits of degrees, and is capable of increase? Infallibility is an absolute impossibility of being deceived; now I desire Mr. S. to shew me the degrees of absolute impossibility; and if he could do that, and consequently there might be degrees of Infallibility, yet I cannot believe that Mr. S. would think fit to call any degree of Infallibility a weak Faith or assent.

2. *Because an infallible security in the particulars mention'd, is impossible to be had; I mean in an ordinary way, and without miracle and particular revelation; because the nature of the thing is incapable of it. The utmost security we have of the antiquity of any Book is human Testimony, and all human Testimony is fallible for this plain reason, because all men are fallible. And though Mr. S. in defence of his beloved Tradition is pleased to say that human Testimony in some cases is infallible, yet I think no man before him was ever so hardy as to maintain that the Testimony of fallible men is infallible. I grant it to be in many cases certain; that is, such as a considerate man may prudently rely and proceed upon, and hath no just cause to doubt of; and such as none but an obstinate man or a fool can deny. And that thus the learned men of his own Church define certainty, Mr. S. (if he would but vouchsafe to read such Books) might have learnt from * Melchior Canus, who speaking of the firmness of human Testimony in some cases, (which yet he did not believe to be infallible) defines it thus, Those things are certain among men, which cannot be deny'd without obstinacy and folly. I know Mr. S. is pleased to say, that certainty and infallibility are all one. And he is the first man that I know of that ever said it. And yet perhaps some body may have been before him in it, for I remember Tully says, That there is nothing so foolish but some Philosopher or other has said it. I am sure Mr. S's own Philosopher Mr. Wh. contradicts him in this most clearly, in his Preface to Rushworth's Dialogues; where explicating the term Moral certainty, he tells us, that some understood by it such*

* De lo. Theol. lib. II. c. 4. Certa apud homines ea sunt, quae negari sine pervicacia, & stultitia non possunt.

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such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working other ways; and this presently after he tells us, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors consider'd as mistaken in undervaluing it. So that according to Mr. White true certainty may consist with a possibility of the contrary, and consequently Mr. S. is mistaken in thinking certainty and infallibility to be all one. Nay, I do not find any two of them agreeing among themselves, about the notions of infallibility and certainty. Mr. Wh. says, that what some call moral certainty, is true certainty, though it do not take away a possibility of the contrary. Mr. S. asserts the direct contrary, that Moral certainty is only probability because it does not take away the possibility of the contrary. *The Guide in Controversies** differs from them both, and makes moral, certain and infallible all one. I desire that they would agree these matters among themselves before they quarrel with us about them. * P. 135.

In brief then, though moral certainty be sometimes taken for a high degree of probability which can only produce a doubtful assent; yet it is also frequently us'd for a firm and undoubted assent to a thing upon such grounds as are fit fully to satisfy a prudent man; and in this sense I have always us'd this Term. But now infallibility is an absolute security of the understanding from all possibility of mistake in what it believes. And there are but two ways for the understanding to be thus secur'd; either by the perfection of its own nature, or by supernatural assistance. But no human understanding being absolutely secur'd from possibility of mistake by the perfection of its own nature, (which I think all mankind except Mr. S. have hitherto granted) it follows, that no man can be infallible in any thing, but by supernatural assistance. Nor did ever the Church of Rome pretend to infallibility upon any other account, as every one knows that hath been conversant in the Writings of their Learned men. And Mr. Cressy in his * Answer to Dr. Pierce hath not the face to contend for any other infallibility but this, that the immutable God can actually preserve a mutable creature from actual mutation: But I can by no means agree with him in what immediately follows, concerning the Omniscience of a creature; that God, who is absolutely omniscient, can teach a rational Creature all truths necessary or expedient to be known; so that though a man may have much ignorance, yet he may be in a sort omniscient within a determinate Sphere. Omniscient within a determinate sphere, is an infinite within a finite sphere; and is not that a very pretty sort of knowing all things, which may consist with an ignorance of many things? Of all the Controvertists I have met with (except Mr. S.) Mr. Cressy is happiest at these smart and ingenious kind of reasonings. * P. 88, 89.

As to the other Particular of the sense of Books, it is likewise plainly impossible that any thing should be deliver'd in such clear and certain words as are absolutely incapable of any other sense; and yet notwithstanding this, the meaning of them may be so plain as that any unprejudic'd and reasonable man may certainly understand them. How many Definitions and Axioms, &c. are there in Euclid, in the sense of which men are universally agreed, and think themselves undoubtedly certain of it? and yet the words in which they are express'd, may possibly bear another sense. The same may be said concerning the Doctrines and Precepts of the H. Scriptures; and one great reason why men do not so generally agree in the sense of these as of the other, is because the interests, and lusts and passions of men are more concern'd in the one than the other. But whatever uncertainty there may be in the sense of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is so far from affording us any help in this case that it is a thousand times more uncertain and less to be trusted to; especially if we may take that to be the Traditional sense of Texts of Scripture, which we meet with in the Decretals of their Popes, and the Acts of some of their Councils; than which never was any thing

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thing in the whole world more absurd and ridiculous : And whence may we expect to have the infallible Traditional sense of Scripture, if not from the Heads and Representatives of their Church ?

This may abundantly suffice for the vindication of that Passage which Mr. S. makes such a rude clamour about, as if I had therein deny'd the truth and certainty of all Religion ; but durst never trust the Reader with a view of those words of mine upon which he pretended to ground this Calumny. But the world understands well enough, that all this was but a shift of Mr. S's for the satisfaction of his own Party, and a pitiful Art to avoid the vindication of Surefooting, a Task he had no mind to undertake.

*And yet the main design of this Book which he calls Faith vindicated, &c. is to prove that which I do not believe any man living ever denied, viz. That what is true is not possible to be false : Which though it be one of the plainest Truths in the world, yet he proves it so foolishly, as would make any man (if it were not evident of itself) to doubt of it. He proves it from Logick, and Nature, and Metaphysicks, and Ethicks, &c. I wonder he did not do it likewise from Arithmetick, and Geometry, the Principles whereof, he * tells us are concerned in demonstrating the certainty of Oral Tradition. He might also have proceeded to Astrology, and Palmistry, and Chymistry, and have shewn how each of these lend their assistance to the evidencing of this Truth. For that could not have been more ridiculous, than his † Argument from the nature of Subject and Predicate, and Copula in Faith-Propositions ; because forsooth whoever affirms any Proposition of Faith to be true, affirms it impossible to be false. Very true. But would any man argue, that what is true is impossible to be false, from the nature of Subject, Predicate and Copula ? for be the Proposition true or false, these are of the same nature in both, that is, they are Subject, Predicate and Copula.*

*But that the Reader may have a taste of his clear style, and way of reasoning, I shall for his satisfaction transcribe Mr. S's whole Argument from the nature of the Predicate. His words are these. Our Argument from the Copula is particularly strengthned from the nature of the Predicate in the Propositions we speak of ; I mean in such speeches as affirm such and such points of Faith to be true. For True means Existent in Propositions which express only the *An est* of a thing, as most Points of Faith do ; which speak abstractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the subject it speaks of consists, or the *Quid est*. So that most of the Propositions Christians are bound to profess are fully express'd thus, *A Trinity is existent*, &c. and the like may be said of those Points which belong to a Thing or Action past ; as, *Creation was*, &c. For, *Existent* is the Predicate in these two, only affixt to another difference of time ; and 'tis equally impossible such Subjects should neither have been nor not have been, or have been and have not been at once, as it is that a thing should neither be nor not be at present, or both be and not be at present. Regarding then stedfastly the nature of our Predicate [*Existent*] we shall find that it expresses the utmost Actuality of a Thing ; and as taken in the posture it bears in those Propositions, that actually exercis'd, that is, the utmost Actuality in its most actuall state ; that is, as absolutely excluding all manner or least degree of Potentiality, and consequently all possibility of being otherwise ; which is radically destroyed when all Potentiality is taken away. This Discourse holding, which in right to truth I shall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Opposer) to be more than Mathematically demonstrative, it follows inevitably, that whoso is bound to profess a *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c. is or was existent, is also bound to profess that 'tis impossible they should be not Existent, or which*

* Sure-footing P. 93.

† Faith. vindic. P. 6, 7, &c.

P. 9, 10, 11, 12.

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which is all one, that 'tis impossible these points of Faith should be false.

The same appears out of the nature of *distinction* or *division* applied to our Prædicate *Existent*, as found in these Propositions; For could that Prædicate bear a pertinent distinction expressing this and the other respect, or *thus* and *thus*, it might possibly *be* according to one of these respects, or *thus considered*, and *not be* according to another, that is *another way considered*: But this evasion is here impossible; for either those distinguishing Notions must be more Potential or Antecedent to the Notion of *Existent*, and then they neither reach *Existent*, nor supervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which differences ought to do; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Substance* or Being, than *Existent* is; and, so fit to distinguish it in that line; nor, lastly, can any determination in the line of Accidents serve the turn; for, those suppose Existence already put, and so the whole Truth of the Proposition entire and complete antecedently to them: 'Tis impossible therefore that what is thus affirmed to be *True*, should in *any regard* be affirmed *possible to be false*: the impossibility of distinguishing the Prædicate pertinently excluding here all possibility of divers respects.

The same is demonstrated from the impossibility of distinguishing the Subjects of those Faith-Propositions; for those Subjects being Propositions themselves; and accepted for *Truths*, as is supposed, they are incapable of Distinction, as shall be particularly shewn hereafter. Besides, those Subjects being Points of Faith, and so standing in the Abstract, that is, not descending to subsuming respects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent distinguishableness.

The same is demonstrated from the nature of *Truth*, which consists in an Indivisible; whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great soever the conceived approaches towards it may be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwise, Be utterly excluded by the Actuality of *Is* or Existence; which put or discovered, the light of *Truth*, breaks forth and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees* vanish and disappear.

*I have here (Reader) presented thee with a Discourse which (if we may believe Mr. S.) is more than Mathematically demonstrative. A rare Sight indeed! And is not this a pleasant Man, and of good assurance? I now find it true, which he * says elsewhere, That Principles are of an inflexible genius, and self-confident too, and that they love naturally to express themselves with an assuredness. But certainly the sacred names of Principles and Demonstration were never so prophan'd by any Man before. Might not any one write a Book of such Jargon, and call it Demonstration? And would it not equally serve to prove or confute? If he intended this stuff for the satisfaction of the People, he might as well have writ in the Coptick or Slavonian Language: yet I cannot deny, but that it is very suitable to the Principles of the Roman Church; for why should not their Science as well as their Service be in an unknown Tongue? that the one may be as fit to improve their knowledge, as the other is to raise their devotion. But if he design'd this for the Learned, nothing could be more improper; for they are far less apt to admire nonsense than the common People: And I desire that no man (how learned soever he may think himself) would be over-confident, that this is sense. I do verily believe, that neither Harphius nor Rusbrochius, nor the profound Mother Juliana, have any thing in their writings more senseless and obscure than this Discourse of his, which he affirms to be more than Mathematically Demonstrative. So that if I were worthy to advise Mr. S. he should give over this pretence to Science; for whatever he may think, his Talent certainly does not lye that way; but he seems to be as*

* Letter of
Thanks;
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well made for a Mystical Divine, as any man I know. And methinks his Superiors should be sensible of this, and employ him to write about the Deiform fund of the Soul, the super-essential life, the method of Self-annihilation, and the passive unions of nothing with nothing: These are profound Subjects, and he hath a Style peculiarly fitted for them. For even in this parcel of stuff which I have now cited, there are five or six words, such as may-not-bees, potentiality, actuality, actuation, determinative, supervene and sub-fume, (which if they were but well mingled and discreetly ordered, and brought in now and then with a that is, to explain one another) would half set up a man in that way, and enable him to write as Mystical a Discourse as a man would wish. But enough of this. And I have trespass'd not a little upon mine own disposition in saying thus much, though out of a just indignation at confident Nonsense.

It is time now to draw towards a conclusion of this debate. I shall only leave with the Reader a few observations concerning this Book of Mr. S's, and his Doctrine of Infallibility.

First, That the main drift of his Book being to prove that what is true is impossible to be false, he opposes no body that I know of in this matter.

Secondly, That in asserting Infallibility to be necessary to the true nature of Faith, he hath the generality of his own Church his professed Adversaries. The Church of Rome never arrogated to her self any other Infallibility but what she pretends to be founded upon Christ's promise to secure his Church always from Error by a supernatural assistance, which is widely different from Mr. S's rational infallibility of Oral Tradition. Mr. S. surely cannot be ignorant, that the Divines of their Church (till Mr. Rushworth and Mr. White found out this new way) did generally resolve Faith into the infallible Testimony of the Church, and the infallibility of their Church into our Saviour's Promise; and the evidence of the true Church into the Marks of the Church, or the Motives of credibility, which Motives are acknowledg'd to be only prudential, and not demonstrative. * Bellarmine says, that the Marks of the Church do not make it evidently true, which is the true Church, but only evidently credible; and that (says he) is said to be evidently credible which is neither seen in it self, nor in its Principles; but yet hath so many and so weighty Testimonies, that every wise man hath reason to believe it. Becanus † to the same purpose, that the Motives of credibility are only the foundation of a prudent, but not of an infallible assent. I know very well that Mr. Knott and some others would fain persuade us, that an assent in some sort infallible, may be built upon prudential Motives, which is absurd as it's possible; but if it were true, yet Mr. S. would not accept of this sort of infallibility; nothing less will serve him than demonstrative Motives, and such as are absolutely conclusive of the thing. Stapleton (as Mr. Cressy tells us) expressly says, that such an infallible certitude of Means is not now necessary to the Pastors of the Church, as was necessary to the Apostles, who were the first founders of the Church. So that, according to these Authors, there may be true Faith where neither the Means nor the Motives of it are such as to raise our assent to the degree of infallibility. And this is as much to the full as any Protestant (that I know of) ever said. Nay, even his Friends of the Tradition, Mr. Rushworth, Mr. White, and Mr. Cressy, are guilty of the same damnable and fundamental Error, as Mr. S. calls it *. For they grant less assurance than that which is infallible, to be sufficient to Christian Faith, and that we are justly condemn'd if we refuse to believe upon such evidence as does ordinarily satisfy prudent men in human affairs. And particularly, Mr. Wh. makes a question whether human nature be capable of infallibility; as I have shewn at large by clear and full Testimonies

* L. 4. de
Ecclef.

† Sum.
Tom. 2.
partic. de
fide. c. 1.

* Letter to
his An-
swerer, p. 5.

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Testimonies out of each of these Authors, in the Answer to Sure-footing †. Of which Testimonies, tho' Mr. S. hath not thought fit to take the least notice throughout his Book; yet I cannot but think it a reasonable request, to desire him to vindicate the Divines of his own Church (especially those of his own way) from these things, before he charge us any farther with them.

Thirdly, *That Mr. S. by this Principle, That infallibility is necessary to the true nature of Faith, makes every true believer infallible in matters of Faith; which is such a Paradox, as I doubt whether ever it enter'd into any other man's mind. But if it be true, what need then of any infallibility in Pope or Council? And if this infallibility be grounded upon the nature of Oral Tradition, what need of Supernatural assistance? I doubt Mr. S. would be loath to preach this Doctrine at Rome; I have often heard, that there is an old testy Gentleman lives there, who would take it very ill that any one besides himself should pretend to be infallible.*

Fourthly, *That Mr. S. by his Principles does plainly exclude from salvation the generality of his own Church, that is, all that do not believe upon his Grounds. And this is the necessary consequence of his reasoning in a late Treatise, entituled, The method to arrive at satisfaction in Religion: The principles whereof are these; That the Church is a Congregation of Faithful; The Faithful are those who have true Faith; That, till it be known which is the true Faith, it cannot be known which is the true Church; That which is the true Faith, can only be known by the true Rule of Faith, which is Oral Tradition; And that the infallibility of this Rule is evident to common sense. And from these Principles he concludes * that those who follow not this Rule, and so are out of this Church, can have no true Faith; And that though many of the Points to which they assent are true; yet their assent is not Faith; for Faith (speaking of Christian Faith) is an assent which cannot possibly be false. So that the Foundation of this Method is the self-evident infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath been sufficiently consider'd in the Answer to Sure-footing, which yet remains unanswer'd. That which I am now concern'd to take notice of, is the consequence of this Method, which does at one blow excommunicate and unchristian the far greatest part of his own Church. For if all who do not follow Oral Tradition as their only Rule of Faith are out of the Church, and can have no true Faith, then all who follow the Council of Trent are ipso facto no Christians. For nothing is plainer, than that that Council did not make Oral Tradition the sole Rule of their Faith, nor rely upon it as such; which hath been prov'd at large in the Answer to Sure-footing.*

But why is Mr. S. so zealous in this matter of infallibility? There is a plain reason for it. He finds that confidence, how weakly soever it be grounded, hath some effect upon the common and ignorant People; who are apt to think there is something more than ordinary in a swaggering man, that talks of nothing but Principles and Demonstration. And so we see it in some other Professions. There are a sort of People very well known, who find that the most effectual way to cheat the People is always to pretend to infallible Cures.

I have now done with his Infallibility. But I must not forget this Letter of Thanks. I shall wholly pass by the passion and ill language of it, which a man may plainly see to have proceeded from a gall'd and uneasy mind. He would fain put on some pleasantness, but was not able to conceal his vexation. Nor shall I insist upon his palpable shuffling about the explication of the Terms Rule and Faith. He was convinc'd that he had explain'd them very untowardly, and therefore would gladly come off by saying that he did not intend explication, but only to prædicate or affirm something of them. And yet the whole design of

† P. 120.
&c.

* Sec. 21.

P. 7.

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the first page of Sure-footing, is to shew the necessity of beginning with the meaning of those words which express the thing under debate: And this method he tells us he will apply to his present purpose, and will examine well what is meant by those words which express the thing he was to discuss, namely, The RULE of FAITH. Now if to examine well what is meant by words, be not to go about to explain them, I must confess my self to be in a great error. Of the same kind is his Apology for his Testimonies, as if they were not intended against the Protestants; whereas his Book was writ against the Protestants; and when he comes to his Testimonies, he† declares the design of them to be, to second by Authority what he had before establish'd by Reason. So that if the Rational part of his Book was intended against the Protestants, and the Testimonies were design'd to second it, I cannot understand why he should say one was less intended against them than the other. But it seems he is so conscious of the weakness of those Testimonies, that he does not think them fit to satisfy any but those who believe him already.*

* P. 105.
† Sure-footing,
P. 126.

As to his charge of false citations, it is but the common artifice of the Roman Controvertists when they have nothing else to say. However, that the world may see how little he is to be trusted, I shall instance in two or three about which he makes the loudest clamour, and leave it to the Reader to judge by these, of his sincerity in the rest.

P. 62.

He says, I notoriously abuse the Preface to Rushworth's Dialogues, in citing the Author of it to say that such certainty as makes the cause always to work the same effect though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty; whereas (says Mr. S.) he only tells us there, p. 7. that by moral certainty [some understood] such a certainty as makes the cause, &c. To vindicate my self in this, I shall only set the Author's words before the Reader's eyes. They are these. This term Moral certainty, every one explicated not alike; but some understood by it such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherways. Others call'd that a moral certainty which proceeds from, &c. A third explication of this word is, &c. Of these three the first ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors consider'd as mistaken in undervaluing it. Is this only to tell us that by moral certainty some understood, &c. Does not the Prefacer also expressly affirm, that what these some understood by moral certainty, ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty? which is the very thing I cited him for.

P. 65.

Another heavy charge is, that according to my usual sincerity, I quote Rushworth's Nephew to say, that a few good words are to be cast in concerning Scripture, [for the satisfaction of indifferent men who have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture] whereas (says Mr. S.) in the place you cite, he only expresses, it would be a satisfaction to indifferent men to see the positions one would induce them to embrace, maintainable by Scripture. Does he only say so? let the Reader judge. The words in Mr. Rushworth are these: Yet this I must tell ye, that it were a great satisfaction for indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture, to see that the Positions you would induce them unto, can be and are maintain'd by Scripture, and that they are grounded therein. Certainly one would think that either this man has no eyes or no forehead.

P. 76, 77.

But the greatest outcry of all is, that I abuse his first Demonstration by virtue of a direct falsification both of his words and sense, by cogging in the word [all]

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[all,] making his principle run thus, that the greatest hopes and fears are applied to the minds of [all] Christians. *This indeed I make to be his Principle grounded upon his words which I had cited a little before; and they are these, First, that Christian Doctrine was at first unanimously settled by the Apostles in the hearts of the faithful, dispers'd in great multitudes over several parts of the world. 2dly. That this Doctrine was firmly beleived by [all] those faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deserting of it to be the way to damnation; so that the greatest hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine Authority, strongly apply'd to the minds of the first Believers, &c. Now if these first believers, to whom he says these hopes and fears were strongly apply'd, be all those faithful he spoke of before, which were dispers'd over several parts of the world, (as the tenor of his words plainly shews) what are these less than all the Christians of that Age? And he himself a little after tells us, there is the same reason of the following Ages. So that I made his Principle run no otherwise than he himself had laid it. And if it contradict what he says elsewhere, it is no new or strange thing. I wonder more at his confidence in charging such falsifications upon me as every man's eyes will presently confute him in. Methinks though a man had all Science, and all Principles, yet it might not be amiss to have some Conscience.*

I shall only speak a few words to the two solid Points, (as I may call them) of his Letter, and I have done.

I had charg'd him that he makes Traditions certainty a first and self-evident Principle, and yet that he goes about to demonstrate it; which I said was impossible to be done, and if it could be done was needless. To avoid this inconvenience which he found himself sorely press'd withal, he distinguishes between Speculative and Practical self-evidence, and says that things which are practically self-evident may be demonstrated, but those that are speculatively so, cannot. But he must not think to shelter himself from so palpable an absurdity by this impertinent distinction. For let things be evident how they will, speculatively or practically, 'tis plain that if they be Principles evident of themselves they need nothing to evidence them; and if they be first Principles there can be nothing to make them more evident, because there is nothing before them to demonstrate them by. Now if Mr. S. had in truth believed that the certainty of Tradition was a first and self-evident Principle, he should by all means have let it alone, for it was in a very good condition to shift for it self; but his blind way of Demonstration is enough to cast a mist about the clearest Truth in the world. But perhaps by the self-evident certainty of Tradition, Mr. S. only means that it is evident to himself; for I dare say it is so to no body else. And if that be his meaning, he did well enough to endeavour to demonstrate it; it was no more than needed.

The other Point is about his First Principles, such as these, a Rule is a Rule; Faith is Faith, &c. which he says † must principle all that can be so- † P. 11. lidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. Of these he hath mighty store, and blesteth himself in it, as the Rich man in the Gospel did in his full Barns, Soul take thine ease, thou hast Principles laid up for many years; and out of an excess of good nature pities my case, who did undertake to write a Dis- P. 74. course about the Ground of Faith, without so much as one principle to bless my self with. But the mischief is, that after all this stir about them they are good for nothing, and of the very same stamp with that frivolous one Aristotle speaks of [if a thing be, it is,] which he rejects as a vain and ridicu- Analys. Poster. 1 7. lous Proposition. Such are Mr. S's first Principles, surfeited of too much truth (as an ingenious Writer of his own Church says of them) and ready to burst with self-evidence, and yet by ten thousand of them a man shall not be able to advance one step in knowledge, because they produce no conclusion but themselves; whereas

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it is of the nature of principles to yield a Conclusion different from themselves. And to convince Mr. S. fully of the foolery of these Principles, I will try what can be done with them, either in a Categorical or Hypothetical Syllogism, e. g. A Rule is a Rule, Tradition is a Rule, Ergo Tradition is a Rule. Again, If a Rule be a Rule, then a Rule is a Rule; But a Rule is a Rule, Ergo. How is any man the wiser for all this? But it may be Mr. S. can make better work with them, and manage them more dextrously, so as to principle any thing that can be solidly concluded in any Controversy.

And now I hope at last to have given Mr. S. full satisfaction; since he has brought me to the very point he desired, to acknowledge that I have no Principles. And indeed if there be no other to be had but such as these, I do declare to all the world, that I neither have any Principles, nor will have any.

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J O B XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.



IN this Chapter *Job* discourseth of the secrets of nature, and the unsearchable perfections of the works of *God*. And the result of his discourse is this. That a perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no less wisdom and understanding than that which made the World and contrived this vast and regular frame of Nature can thoroughly understand the Philosophy of it and comprehend so vast a design: But yet there is a *knowledge* which is very proper to man and lies level to humane understanding; and that is the *knowledge* of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him; the *wisdom* of pleasing *God*, by doing what he commands and avoiding what he forbids: This *Knowledge* and *Wisdom* may be attained by man, and is sufficient to make him happy. *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

These words consist of two Propositions, which are not distinct in sense, but one and the same thing variously express'd; For *wisdom* and *understanding* are synonymous words here; and though sometimes they have different notions, yet in the *Poetical Books of Scripture* they are most frequently used as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently signify either a *speculative knowledge* of things, or a *practical skill* about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing spoken of. And so likewise *the fear of the Lord*, and *departure from evil*, are phrases of a very near sense, and like importance; and therefore we find them several times put together in Scripture: *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil: By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* So that they differ only as cause and effect, which by a *Metonymy* usual in all sorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another.

Prov. 3. 7.
Pro. 16. 6.

Now, *to fear the Lord*, and *to depart from evil*, are phrases which the Scripture useth in a very great latitude, to express to us *the sum of Religion, and the whole of our duty.* And because the large usage of these

phrases is to be the foundation of my following discourse, I shall for the farther clearing of this matter endeavour to shew these two things :

1. That 'tis very usual in the Language of Scripture to express the *whole of Religion* by these and such like phrases.
2. The particular fitness of these two phrases to describe Religion.

I. It is very usual in the Language of Scripture to express the *whole of Religion* by some eminent principle or part of Religion.

The great Principles of Religion are *knowledge, faith, remembrance, love, and fear* ; by all which the Scripture useth to express the *whole duty of man*.

In the *Old Testament*, by the *knowledge, remembrance and fear* of God. Religion is called *The knowledge of the holy*. And wicked men are described to be such as *know not God*. So likewise, by the *fear of the Lord*, frequently in this Book of *Job*, and in the *Psalms* and *Proverbs*. And, *Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another*. And the *fear of God* is expressly said to be the sum of Religion, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of man* : And on the contrary, the wicked are described to be such as *have not the fear of God before their eyes*. And so likewise by the remembrance of God, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth* ; that is, enter upon a religious course betimes : And on the contrary, the character of the wicked is, that *they forget God* ; *The wicked shall be turned into Hell* ; and *all the Nations that forget God*. In the *New Testament*, Religion is usually expressed by *faith in God and Christ*, and the *love* of them. Hence it is, that true Christians are so frequently called *believers*, and wicked and ungodly men *unbelievers*. And that good men are described to be such as *love God*. *All things shall work together for good to them that love God* ; and *such as love the Lord Jesus Christ*. Now the reason why these are put for the *whole of Religion*, is, because the *belief, and knowledge, and remembrance, and love, and fear* of God, are such powerful principles, and have so great an influence upon men to make them Religious, that where any one of these really is, all the rest, together with the true and genuine effects of them, are supposed to be.

And so likewise the sum of all Religion is often expressed by some *eminent part* of it ; which will explain the second phrase here in the Text, *departing from evil*. The *worship of God* is an *eminent part of Religion* ; and *Prayer*, which is often in Scripture expressed by *seeking God*, and *calling upon his Name*, is a chief part of Religious worship. Hence Religion is described by *seeking God*, *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* : and by *calling upon his name*, *Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved*. And so by *coming to God*, and by *departing from evil*. In this fallen state of man Religion begins with *repentance and conversion*, the two opposite terms of which, are *God and Sin* : Hence it is that Religion is described sometimes by *coming to God*. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is* ; that is, no man can be religious, unless he believe there is a God ; sometimes by *departing from sin*, *And he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey* ; that is, such was the bad state of those times of which the Prophet there complains that no man could be religious but he was in danger of being persecuted.

II. For the fitness of these two phrases to describe Religion.

1. For the first, [*the fear of the Lord*] The fitness of this phrase will appear,

appear, if we consider how great an influence the Fear of God hath upon men to make them religious. Fear is a passion that is most deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that Principle of self-preservation which God hath planted in every man. Every one desires his own preservation and happiness, and therefore hath a natural dread and horror of every thing that can destroy his Being, or endanger his happiness. And the greatest *danger* is from the greatest *power*, and that is *Omnipotency*. So that *the fear of God* is an inward acknowledgment of a holy and just Being, which is armed with an almighty and irresistible power; God having hid in every Man's Conscience a secret awe and dread of his infinite power, and eternal justice. Now *fear* being so intimate to our natures, it is the strongest bond of Laws, and the great security of our duty.

There are two bridles or restraints which God hath put upon humane nature, *shame* and *fear*. Shame is the weaker, and hath Place only in those in whom there are some remainders of virtue. Fear is the stronger, and works upon all who love themselves and desire their own preservation. Therefore in this degenerate state of mankind, *fear* is that passion which hath the greatest power over us, and by which God and his Laws take the surest hold of us: Our *desire*, and *love*, and *hope*, are not so apt to be wrought upon by the representation of virtue, and the promises of reward and happiness, as our *fear* is from the apprehensions of Divine displeasure. For though we have lost in a great measure the gust and relish of true happiness, yet we still retain a quick sense of pain and misery. So that fear relies upon a natural love of our selves, and is complicated with a necessary desire of our own preservation. And therefore Religion usually makes its first entrance into us by this passion; hence perhaps it is that *Solomon* more than once calls *the fear of the Lord* the *beginning of Wisdom*.

2. As for the Second phrase [*departing from evil*] the fitness of it to express the *whole duty of man*, will appear, if we consider the necessary connexion that is between the negative and the positive part of our duty. He that is careful to avoid all sin will sincerely endeavour to perform his duty. For the soul of man is an active principle, and will be employed one way or other, it will be doing something; if a man abstain from evil, he will do good. Now there being such a strait connexion between these, *the whole of our duty* may be expressed by either of them; but most fitly by *departing from evil*, because that is the first part of our duty. Religion begins in the forsaking of sin;

*Virtus est vitium fugere, & sapientia prima
Stultitia caruisse*—

Virtue begins in the forsaking of vice; and the first part of wisdom is not to be a fool. And therefore the *Scripture*, which mentions these parts of our duty, doth constantly put *departing from evil* first; *Depart from evil and do good. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* We are first to put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and then to be renewed in the spirit of our Minds, and to put on the new man, &c. Let him eschew evil and do good. To all which I may add this farther consideration, that the Law of God contained in the ten Com-
mandments,

Ps. 34. 14.
& 37. 27.
Isa. 1. 16,
17. & 55.
7. Eph. 4.
23, 24.
1Pet. 3. 11.

mandments, consisting mostly of prohibitions, (*Thou shalt not do such or such a thing*) our observance of it is most fitly expressed by *departing from evil*, which yet includes obedience likewise to the positive Precepts implied in those Prohibitions.

Having thus explain'd the *Words*, I come now to consider the *Proposition* contain'd in them, which is this:

That Religion is the best Knowledge and Wisdom.

This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways.

1. *By a direct proof of it.*
2. *By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness.*
3. *By vindicating Religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence.*

I begin with the direct proof of this: And because Religion comprehends two things, the *knowledge* of the *Principles* of it, and a *suitable life and practice*; (the first of which being *speculative*, may more properly be called *knowledge*; and the latter, because 'tis *practical*, may be called *wisdom* or *prudence*) therefore I shall endeavour distinctly to prove these two things.

1. *That Religion is the best knowledge.*

2. *That 'tis the truest wisdom.*

1. First. *That it is the best knowledge.*

The knowledge of Religion commends it self to us upon these two accounts.

1. 'Tis the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most excellent.

2. Of those things which are most useful and necessary for us to know.

First, It is the best knowledge, because it is the knowledge of those things which are in themselves most *excellent* and *desirable to be known*; and those are *God* and our *duty*. *God* is the sum and comprehension of all perfection. It is delightful to know the *Creatures*, because there are particular excellencies scatter'd and dispers'd among them, which are some shadows of the Divine Perfections: But in *God* all Perfections in their highest degree and exaltation meet together and are united. How much more delightful then must it needs be to fix our minds upon such an object in which there is nothing but *beauty* and *brightness*, what is *amiable* and what is *excellent*; what will *ravish our affections* and *raise our wonder*, *please us* and *astonish us* at once: And that the finite measure and capacity of our understandings is not able to take in and comprehend the infinite perfections of *God*, this indeed shews the excellency of the object, but doth not altogether take away the delightfulness of the knowledge. For as it is pleasant to the Eye to have an endless prospect, so is it some pleasure to a finite understanding to view unlimited excellencies which have no shore or bounds, tho' it cannot comprehend them. There is a pleasure in admiration; and this is that which properly causeth admiration, when we discover a great deal in an object which we understand to be excellent, and yet we see we know not how much more beyond that, which our understandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.

And as the *knowledge of God* in his *nature* and *perfections* is excellent and desirable, so likewise to know him in those glorious manifestations of himself in the *Works of Creation* and *Providence*; and above all, in that stupendious work of the *Redemption* of the world by *Jesus Christ*, which

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was such a mystery, and so excellent a piece of knowledge that *the Angels* are said to *desire to pry into it.* 1 Pet. 1. 12.

And as the *knowledge of God* is excellent, so likewise of *our Duty*, which is nothing else but *virtue and goodness and holiness*, which are the image of God, a conformity to the nature and will of God, and an imitation of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, so far as we are capable: For to know our duty is to know what it is to be like God in *goodness, and piety, and patience, and clemency, in pardoning injuries, and passing by provocations; in justice and righteousness, in truth and faithfulness; and in a hatred and detestation of the contrary of these*: In a word, it is to know what is the good and acceptable will of God, what it is that he loves and delights in, and is pleased withal, and would have us to do in order to our perfection and our happiness. It is deservedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to know the *laws of the Land*, and the *Customs of the Countrey* we live in, and the *will of the Prince* we live under: How much more, to know the *Statutes of Heaven*, and the *Laws of eternity*, those immutable and eternal rules of justice and righteousness; to know the will and pleasure of the great Monarch and universal King of the World, and the *Customs of that Countrey* where we must live for ever? This made *David* to admire the Law of God at that strange rate, and to advance the knowledge of it above all other knowledge, *I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* Psal. 119. 96.

Secondly, 'Tis the *knowledge of those things which are most useful and necessary* for us to know. The *goodness* of every thing is measured by its *end and use*, and that's the best thing which serves the best end and purpose; and the more necessary any thing is to such an end, the better it is: So that the best knowledge is that which is of greatest use and necessity to us in order to our *great end*, which is *eternal happiness*, and the *salvation of our souls*. Curious speculations, and the contemplation of things that are impertinent to us, and do not concern us, nor serve to promote our happiness, are but a more specious and ingenious sort of idleness, a more pardonable and creditable kind of Ignorance. That Man that doth not know those things which are of use and necessity for him to know is but an ignorant Man, whatever he may know besides. Now the knowledge of *God* and of *Christ*, and of our *duty*, is of the greatest usefulness and necessity to us in order to our happiness. It's of absolute necessity that we should know *God* and *Christ*, in order to our being happy; *This is life eternal* (that is, the only way to it) *to know thee the only true God, and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.* John 17. 3 It is necessary also in order to our happiness to know our *duty*: because 'tis necessary for us to do it, and it is impossible to do it except we know it.

So that whatsoever other knowledge a man may be endued withal, he is but an ignorant Person who doth not know God, the Author of his being, the preserver and protector of his life, his Sovereign, and his Judge, the giver of every good and perfect gift, his surest refuge in trouble, his best Friend or worst Enemy, the present support of his life, his hopes in death, his future happiness, and his portion for ever: who does not know his relation to God, the duty that he owes him, and the way to please him who can make him happy or miserable for ever: who doth not know the Lord Jesus Christ who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

If a man by a vast and imperious mind, and a heart large as the sand up-

on the sea-shore, (as it is said of Solomon) could command all the knowledge of *Nature* and *Art*, of *words* and *things*; could attain to a mastery in all Languages, and sound the depths of all Arts and Sciences, measure the earth and the heaven, and tell the stars, and declare their orders and motions; could discourse of the interests of all States, the intrigues of all Courts, the reason of all Civil laws and constitutions, and give an account of the History of all Ages; could speak of trees, from the Cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyssop that springs out of the wall; and of beasts also and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes: and yet should in the mean time, be destitute of the knowledge of God and Christ, and his duty; all this would be but an impertinent vanity, and a more glittering kind of Ignorance; and such a man (like the Philosopher, who whilst he was gazing upon the stars, fell into the ditch) would but *sapienter descendere in infernum*, be undone with all this knowledge, and with a great deal of wisdom go down to Hell.

2. Secondly, *That to be Religious is the truest wisdom*, and that likewise upon two accounts.

1. Because it is to be wise for our selves.

2. It is to be wise as to our main interest and concernment.

1. 'Tis to be wise for our selves. There's an expression, *Job 22. 21. He that is wise is profitable to himself*; and *Prov. 9. 12. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self*; intimating that wisdom regards a man's own interest and advantage, and that he is not a wise man that doth not take care of himself and his own concernments, according to that of Old Ennius, *nequicquam sapere sapientem, qui sibi ipsi prodesse non quiret*, That man hath but an empty title of Wisdom and is not really wise who is not wise for himself. As *self-preservation* is the first principle of *Nature*, so care of our selves and our own interest is the first part of *Wisdom*. He that is wise in the affairs and concernments of other men, but careless and negligent of his own, that man may be said to be busy, but he is not wise: he is employed indeed, but not so as a wise man should be. Now this is the *Wisdom of Religion*, that it directs a man to a care of his own proper interest and concernment.

2. *It is to be wise as to our main interest*. Our chief end and highest interest is happiness: And this is *happiness* to be freed from all (if it may) however from the greatest evils; and to enjoy (if it may be) all good, however the chiefest. *To be happy* is not only to be freed from the pains and diseases of the body, but from anxiety and vexation of spirit: not only to enjoy the pleasures of sense, but peace of Conscience and tranquility of mind. *To be happy*, is not only to be so for a little while, but as long as may be; and if it be possible, for ever. Now *Religion* designs our greatest and longest happiness; it aims at a freedom from the greatest evils, and to bring us to the possession and enjoyment of the greatest good. For Religion wisely considers that men have *immortal spirits*, which as they are *spirits* are capable of a pleasure and happiness distinct from that of our bodies and our senses; and because they are *immortal*, are capable of an everlasting happiness. Now our souls being the best part of our selves, and *eternity* being infinitely the most considerable duration, the greatest wisdom is to secure the interest of our souls and of *eternity* though it be with loss and to the prejudice of our temporal and inferior Interests. Therefore Religion directs us rather to secure inward peace than outward ease, to be more careful to avoid everlasting and intolerable torment than short

short and light afflictions which are but for a moment ; to court the favour of God more than the friendship of the World, and not so much to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, as him who after he hath kill'd, can destroy both body and soul in hell : In a word, our main interest is to be as happy as we can, and as long as is possible ; and if we be cast into such circumstances, that we must be either in part and for a time or else wholly and always miserable, the best wisdom is to chuse the greatest and most lasting happiness, but the least and shortest misery. Upon this account Religion prefers those pleasures which flow from the presence of God for evermore, infinitely before the transitory pleasures of this world, and is much more careful to avoid eternal misery than present sufferings. This is the wisdom of Religion, that upon consideration of the whole and casting up all things together, it does advise and lead us to our best interest.

II. The *Second* way of confirmation shall be by endeavouring to shew the ignorance and folly of irreligion. Now all that are irreligious are so upon one of these two accounts: Either, *First*, because they do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion, as *the existence of God, the immortality of the Soul, and future rewards* : or else, *Secondly*, because though they do in some sort believe these things, yet they live contrary to this their belief ; and of this kind are the far greatest part of wicked men. The *first* sort are guilty of that which we call *speculative*, the *other* of *practical Atheism*. I shall endeavour to shew the Ignorance and folly of both these.

First, Speculative Atheism is unreasonable, and that upon these Five accounts. 1. Because it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world. 2. Nor does it give any reasonable account of the universal consent of mankind in this apprehension, That there is a God. 3. It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. 4. The Atheist pretends to know that which no man can know. 5. Atheism contradicts it self.

I. *Because it gives no tolerable account of the existence of the world.* One of the greatest difficulties that lies in the Atheist's way is, upon his own supposition *that there is no God*, to give a likely account of the existence of the world. We see this vast frame of the World, and an innumerable multitude of creatures in it, all which we who believe a God attribute to *Him* as the Author of them. For a *Being* suppos'd of infinite goodness and wisdom and power is a very likely cause of these things. What more likely to make this vast world, to stretch forth the Heavens and lay the foundation of the Earth, and to form these and all things in them of nothing, than infinite power ? What more likely to communicate Being and so many degrees of happiness to so many several sorts of creatures, than infinite goodness ? What more likely to contrive this admirable frame of the Universe and all the creatures in it, each of them so perfect in their kind and all of them so fitted to each other and to the whole, than infinite counsel and wisdom ? This seems to be no unreasonable account.

But let us see now what account the *Atheist* gives of these things. If there be no God there are but these *two* ways imaginable for the world to be. Either it must be said, That not only the Matter but also the *Frame* of this world is eternal ; and that as to the main, things always were as they are without any first cause of their being ; which is the way of the

Aristotelian

Aristotelian Atheist; (those I mean, who proceed upon *Aristotle's* supposition of the eternity of the world, but yet deny it to be from God, which he expressly asserts) Or else the *matter* of the world being supposed to be eternal and of it self, the original of this vast and beautiful *frame* must be ascribed meerly to *chance*, and the casual concourse of the parts of matter; which is the way of the *Epicurean* Atheist. But neither of these ways gives a tolerable account of the existence of the world.

I. I shall first consider the *Hypothesis* of those whom for distinction sake I call the *Aristotelian* Atheists, which is this; That not only the *matter* but also the *frame* of the world is eternal, and that as to the main it was always as it is, of it self; and that there hath been from all eternity a succession of men and other creatures without any first cause of their being.

It seems to be very hard, and if that would do any good might be just matter of complaint, that we are fallen into so prophane and sceptical an age which takes a pleasure and a pride in unravelling almost all the received principles both of Religion and Reason: So that we are put many times to prove those things which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themselves. And such almost are these Principles, *That God is*, and *That all things are made by him*; which by reason of the bold cavils of perverse and unreasonable men we are now-a-days put to defend.

That something is of it self is evident, because we see things are. And the things that we see must either have had some first cause of their being, or have been always and of themselves. One of these two is unavoidable.

So that the controversy between us and this sort of Atheist comes to this; Which is the more credible opinion, that the world was never made nor had a beginning but always was as it is, and that there hath been from all eternity a succession of men and other creatures without any first cause of their being; or, that there was from all eternity such a *being* as we conceive *God* to be, infinite in power, goodness and wisdom, which made us and all other things; The *first* of these opinions I shall shew to be altogether incredible, and the *latter* to have all the credibility and evidence of which a thing of that nature is capable, and such evidence as is sufficient to convince any impartial and considerate man.

Now in comparing the probabilities of things, that we may know on which side the advantage lies, these two considerations are of great moment, What the arguments are on each side, and what the difficulties. For if there be fair proofs on the one side, and none at all on the other, and if the most pressing difficulties be on that side on which there are no proofs: this is sufficient to render *one* opinion very credible and the *other* altogether incredible.

These *two things* therefore I shall endeavour to make good, in the matter that is now under our consideration. *First*, That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other. And *Secondly*, That the side on which there is no proof is incumbered with the greatest difficulties.

First, That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.

This Question, *Whether the world was created and had a beginning, or not?*

not? is a question concerning an ancient matter of fact, which can only be decided these two ways; by *testimony*, and by *probabilities of reason*. *Testimony*, is the principal argument in a matter of this nature, and if fair *probabilities of reason* concur with it this argument hath all the strength it can have: Now both these are clearly on the affirmative side of the question, viz. That the world was created, and had a beginning.

I. *Testimony*; of which there be two kinds, *Divine* and *Humane*.

Divine Testimony, as such, is not proper to be us'd in this cause considering the occasion of the present debate: For that would be to beg the first and main question now in controversy, which is, Whether there be a God or not? which a testimony from God does suppose, and therefore ought not to be brought for the proof of it. 'Tis true indeed that those effects of Divine Power, I mean miracles which will prove a Divine testimony to an Infidel, will as well prove the being of a God to an Atheist; But when we dispute against those who deny a God no testimony ought to be presum'd to be from God, but must be prov'd to be so. And whatever argument proves that will also prove that there is a God.

Humane testimonies are of two sorts; *universal tradition*, and *written History*. Both these are plainly and beyond dispute on our side.

First, There is an *universal tradition* concerning the beginning of the world, and that it was made by God. And for the evidence of this we have the concurring Tradition of the most ancient Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Phenicians**; and of the most barbarous the *Indians*; who as *Strabo*† tells us, did in many things agree with the *Grecians*, particularly in this, that the world did begin, and should have an end; and that God the maker and governor of it, is present in all parts of it. And *Acosta* tells us, that at the first discovery of *America*, the inhabitants of *Peru* did worship one chief God, under the name or title of *The maker of the Universe*: And yet these People had not had any commerce with the other known parts of the world, for God knows how many ages.

To which may be added, that the most ancient of the Philosophers, and those that were the heads of the chief Sects of Philosophy, as *Thales*, *Anaxagoras* and *Pythagoras* did likewise consent to this Tradition. Particularly concerning *Thales*. *Tully** tells us that he was the first of all the Philosophers that enquired into these things, and he said, that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind (or intelligent Principle) which fashion'd all things out of water. So likewise *Strabo** informs us that the *Brachmans*, the chief Sect of Philosophers among the *Indians*, agreed with the *Grecians* in this, That the world was made of water. Which agrees exactly with *Moses's* account of the Creation, viz. That the Spirit of God moved upon the face of waters; which *St. Peter** expresses thus, That by the word of God the heavens and the earth (for so the *Hebrews* call the world) were of old ἐκ ὕδατος constituted or made of water; not standing out of the water, as our Translation renders it.

Nay *Aristotle** himself, who was the great assertor of the eternity of the world, gives this account why the Gods were anciently represented by the Heathens as swearing by the lake *Styx*, because water was supposed to be the principle of all things. And this, he tells us, was the most ancient opinion concerning the original of the world; and that the very oldest Writers of Theology, and those who liv'd at the greatest distance from his time, were of this mind. And in the Book *de Mundo** it is freely

* Vide
Grot. de
verit. Chr.
Relig. l. 1.
† Geog.
l. 15.

* De Nat.
Deorum,
l. 1.

* Geogr.
l. 15.

* 2 Pet. 3.
5.

* Metaph.
l. 1. c. 3.

* Cap. 6.

* Differ-
tat. 1.

acknowledg'd to have been an ancient saying, and a general Tradition among all men, *That all things are of God, and were made by him.* I will conclude this with that full Testimony of *Maximus Tyrius* * to this purpose: *However (says he) men may differ in other things, yet they all agree in this Law or Principle, that there is one God, King and Father of all things, &c. This the Greeks say, this the Barbarians; this those that live upon the Continent, and those that dwell by the Sea; the wise and the unwise.*

Secondly, We have likewise a most ancient and credible *History* of the beginning of the world; I mean the *History* of *Moses*, with which no Book in the world in point of antiquity can contend. I shall not now go about to strengthen my argument, by pleading the Divine authority of this Book; for which yet I could offer good evidence, if that were proper to the matter in hand. It is sufficient to my present purpose that *Moses* have the ordinary credit of an Historian given him, which none in reason can deny him, he being cited by the most ancient of the Heathen Historians, and the antiquity of his writings never questioned by any of them, as *Josephus* * assures us.

* L. 1. con-
tra Appian.

Now this *History* of *Moses* gives us a particular account of the beginning of the world, and of the creation of it by God. Which assertion of his is agreeable to the most ancient *Writers* among the *Heathen*, whether *Poets* or *Historians*. And several of the main parts of *Moses's* *History*, as concerning the *Flood* and the *first Fathers* of the *several Nations* of the World (of which he gives a particular account, *Gen. 10.*) do very well accord with the most ancient accounts of *Prophane History*. And I do not know, whether any thing ought more to recommend the *Writings* of *Moses* to a human belief, than the easy and credible account which he gives of the original of the World, and of the first peopling of it.

*Vide Dr.
Stilling-
fleet's Orig.
Sac. where
this is fully
made
out.

As to the account of ancient times, both the *Egyptian* and *Chaldaean* accounts, which are pretended by some to be so vastly different from that of the *Scriptures*, may for all that be, near the matter, easily reconcil'd with it*; if we do but admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch*, very credible persons and diligent searchers into ancient Books, do most expressly assure us, viz. that both those *Nations* did anciently reckon months for years. And the account of the *Chineses* is not hard to be reconcil'd with that of the *Septuagint*. Now in so nice and obscure a matter, as the account of ancient times is, it ought to satisfy any fair and reasonable enquirer if they can be brought any whit near one another.

So that *universal Tradition* and the most ancient *History* in the world, are clearly on our side. And if they be, one can hardly with a more convincing argument. For if the world, and consequently mankind had a beginning, there is all the reason in the world to expect these two things: *First*, that there should be an *universal Tradition* concerning this matter; because it was the most memorable thing that could be transmitted to posterity. And this was easy to be done, if mankind sprang from one common root and original, from whence this *Tradition* would naturally be universally diffus'd. *Secondly*, it may with the same reason be expected, that so remarkable a thing should be recorded in the most ancient *History*. Now both these have accordingly happen'd. But then on the other hand, if the world was eternal and had no beginning there could be no real ground for such a *Tradition* or *History*. And if such a *Tradition* were at any time endeavour'd to be set on foot, it is not easy to imagine how it should

should at first gain entertainment, but much more difficult to conceive how ever it should come to be *universally* propagated. For upon the *supposition* of those who hold the eternity of the world, the world was always peopled; and if so, there could be no common head or spring from whence such a *Tradition* would naturally derive it self into all parts of the world. So that unless all the world was sometime of one *language*, and under one *Government* (which it never was that we know of since it was peopled) no endeavour and industry could make such a *Tradition* common.

If it be said, that this *Tradition* began after some universal deluge, out of which possibly but one family might escape, and that possibly too of barbarous people; from whom any fond and groundless conceit might spring and afterwards spread it self as mankind increased. This I shall have occasion to consider in a more proper place. In the mean time I have shewn, even from the acknowledgment of *Aristotle* himself, that there was anciently such a *Tradition* concerning the beginning of the world. Nay, if we may believe him, he himself was the very first asserter of the eternity of the world. For he * says expressly, *That all the Philosophers that were before him, did hold that the world was made.* Thus much for the first kind of *proof* this matter is capable of, namely, *testimony*.

* De Celo
l. 1. c. 10.

2dly. The *probabilities of reason* do all likewise favour the beginning of the world: As,

1. The want of any *History* or *Tradition* ancients than what is consistent with the received opinion of the time of the world's beginning; nay, the most ancient *Histories* were written long after that time. This *Lucretius*, the famous *Epicurean*, urgeth as a strong presumption that the world had a beginning,

— Si nulla fuit genitalis origo
Terrarum & Cæli, semperque æternæ fuere:
Cur supra bellum Thebanum, & funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ?

i. e. If the world had no beginning, how is it that the Greek Poets (the most ancient of their *Writers*) mention nothing higher than the Theban War, and the destruction of Troy? Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about that time? Or had mankind no way till of late to record them and propagate the memory of them to posterity? It is much, if men were from eternity, that they should not find out the way of writing all that *long* duration, which had past before that Time. Sure he was a fortunate man indeed, who after men had been eternally so dull as not to find it out, had the luck at last to hit upon it.

But it may be, the famous actions of former times were always recorded, but that the memorials of them have been several times lost by universal deluges, which have now and then happen'd and swept all away, except (it may be) two or three persons, that have escap'd and begun the world again upon a new score. This is the only refuge that the *Atheist* hath to fly to, when he is prest with this and the like arguments. But he cannot possibly escape this way. For these universal inundations must either be *natural* or *supernatural*. If they be *supernatural* (as any man that considers well the frame of the world, and how hard it is to

give a natural reason of them, would be inclin'd to think) then indeed it is easy to conceive how a few of mankind, and no more, should escape: Because this will depend upon the pleasure of that superior Being which is supposed supernaturally to order these things. But this is to yield what we have all this while contended for, *viz.* That there is a God. But if they be *natural*, which the *Atheist* must say, then there is nothing to restrain them from a total destruction, not only of mankind, but of all the beasts of the earth. This the *Atheist* cannot deny, not only to be very possible, but exceeding probable; because he grants it to have come so near the matter, that but very few escap'd, and no doubt with great difficulty. Now it is the greatest wonder in the world, that a thing (according to their own supposition) so likely to happen, should never have fallen out in an infinite duration. Will any man have the face to say that a thing is likely which did never yet happen from all eternity? One would think that not only whatever is probable, but whatever can possibly happen should be brought about in that space: So that if mankind had been from eternity it had in all probability, I had almost said, been destroyed from all eternity, but I may confidently say, long since ruin'd.

2. Another *probability* of the world's beginning is, the account which we have of the *original of Learning and the most useful Arts* in several parts of the world. Now if the world had been eternal, these in all likelihood would have been found out, and generally spread long ago and beyond the memory of all ages. There are some *Arts* indeed that are peculiarly convenient to some particular Nations; and others that are only serviceable to the humour and fashion of one or more ages. These are not likely to spread, and they may come in, and go out, and return again as often as there is occasion. But those which are generally useful to mankind in all times and places, if they were once found out (and who would not think they should in an eternal duration?) it is not imaginable but that they should have been spread innumerable ages since. Nor can any man give a good reason how they should ever be lost, but by some such accident as an universal deluge, which has been spoken to already. But now on the contrary, the beginnings of *Learning* and of the most useful *Arts* in several Nations, is very well known. And I add farther, that where-ever Learning and Civil Arts have come, this *Tradition* concerning the *beginning of the world* hath been most vigorous, and asserted with the greatest clearness and confidence.

3. The several parts of which the world consists, being (so far as by those parts of it which we know, we can possibly judge of the rest) in their nature corruptible; it is more than probable, that in an infinite duration this frame of things would long since have been dissolv'd; especially, if (as the *Atheist* affirms) there be no superior being, no wise and intelligent principle to repair and regulate it, and to prevent those innumerable disorders and calamitous accidents, which must in so long a space in all probability have happen'd to it. This *Lucretius* * also urges as a convincing proof that the world was not eternal,

*Quare etiam nativa necesse est confiteare
Hæc eadem; neq; enim mortali corpore quæ sunt
Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuissent
Immensi validas ævi contemnere vires.*

It must necessarily (says he) be acknowledg'd that the world had a beginning; otherwise those things which are in their own nature corruptible had never been able, from all eternity to have held out against those forcible and violent assaults which in an infinite duration must have happen'd. Nay, thus much Aristotle himself every where grants, that if the frame of the world be liable to dissolution, it must of necessity be acknowledg'd to have had a beginning.

These are some of the chief Probabilities on our side; which being taken together, and in their united force, have a great deal of conviction in them. Especially if this be added, that there is no kind of *positive proof* so much as pretended on the other side. The utmost that *Aristotle* pretends to prove, is, That the world proceeded from God by the way of a natural and necessary effect, as light does from the Sun. Which if it be true (as there is no tolerable ground for it) the World indeed would be without beginning, but not of it self. And thus I have done with the first consideration I propounded to speak to, *viz. That there are fair proofs on our side, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.* I proceed therefore to the

Second Consideration, That the most pressing difficulties are on that side on which there is no proof.

Those who deny a God, and hold the world to have been eternal and of it self, have only two things to object against us: The difficulties that there are in the *notion of a God, and in making the world of nothing.* To the first I answer: That we attribute nothing to God that hath any repugnancy or contradiction in it. *Power, wisdom, goodness, justice and truth,* have no repugnancy in them to our reason; because we own these Perfections to be in some degree in our selves; and therefore they may be in the highest degree that is possible in another. The *eternity* of God and his *immensity*, and his *being of himself*, how difficult soever they may be to be conceived, yet these perfections must be granted to be somewhere; and therefore they may as well, nay much better, be ascrib'd to God, in whom we suppose all other perfections to meet, than to any thing else. And as for God's being a *spirit*, whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving the notion of a *spirit*, yet the *Atheist* must grant the thing, that there is a being or principle really distinct from matter; or else shew how mere matter, which is confessed by themselves to be void of sense and understanding, and to move necessarily, can produce any thing that has sense, understanding and liberty. As to the other difficulty, of *making the world of nothing*, I shall only say this: that though it signify an inconceivable excess of power, yet there can no contradiction be shewn in it. And it is every whit as easy to conceive that something should be caus'd to be that was not before, as that any thing should be of it self; which yet must be granted on both sides; and therefore this difficulty ought not to be objected by either.

But then on the other side there are these *two* great and real difficulties. *First*, That men generally have always believed the contrary, *viz.* That the World had a beginning, and was made by God. Which is a strong evidence that this account of the existence of the world is more natural, and of a more easy conception to human understanding. And indeed it is very natural to conceive that every thing which is imperfect (as the world and all the creatures in it must be acknowledg'd in many respects

to be) had some cause which produc'd it, such as it is, and determin'd the bounds and limits of its perfection: but that which is of it self and without a cause, may be any thing, and have any perfection which does not imply a contradiction. *Secondly*. To assert mankind to have been of it self, and without a cause, hath this invincible objection against it; that we plainly see every man to be from another. So that mankind is asserted to have no cause of its being, and yet every particular man must be acknowledged to have a father; which is every whit as absurd in an infinite succession of men, as in any finite number of generations. It is more easy indeed to conceive how a constant and permanent being, suppose *matter*, should always have been of it self; and then that *that* should be the foundation of infinite successive changes and alterations: But an infinite succession of the generations of men without any permanent foundation is utterly unimaginable. If it be said that the *earth* was always, and in time did produce *men*, and that they ever since have produc'd one another; this is to run into one great absurdity of the *Epicurean* way, which shall be consider'd in its proper place.

And thus I have endeavour'd as plainly and briefly as the nature of the Argument would admit, to prove that the account which the *Scripture* gives of the existence of the world, is most credible, and agreeable to the reason of mankind; and that this *First* account which the *Atheist* gives of it, is altogether incredible. And now I expect after all this the *Atheist* will complain, that all that hath been said does not amount to a *strict demonstration* of the thing. It may be so. And if the *Atheist* would undertake to *demonstrate* the contrary, there might be some reason for this complaint. In the mean time I desire to know whether when both sides are agreed that the world is, and that it must either have its original from God, or have been always of it self; and if it have been made evident, that on *one side* there are fair *proofs* both from *testimony* and *reason* and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of, and no pretence of proof on the *other*; and that the *difficulties* are most pressing on that *side* which is destitute of proof; I say, if this have been made evident, I desire to know whether this be not upon the matter as satisfactory to a wise man as a *Demonstration*? For in this case there can be no doubt on which side the clear advantage of evidence lies, and consequently which way a prudent man ought to determine assent.

I come now in the *Second* place, to consider the *other account* which another sort of *Atheists*, those whom I call the *Epicureans*, do give of the existence of the world. And 'tis this. They suppose the matter of which the world is constituted to be eternal and of it self, and then an infinite empty space for the infinite little parts of this matter (which they call *Atoms*) to move and play in; and that these being always in motion did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counsel or design and without the disposal and contrivance of any wise and intelligent being, at last by a lucky casualty entangle and settle themselves in this beautiful and regular frame of the world which we now see. And that the *Earth*, being at first in its full vigor and fruitfulness, did then bring forth men and all other sorts of living creatures as it does plants now.

This is in short the *Epicurean* account of the original of the world, which as absurd as it is *Lucretius* * hath very elegantly expressed in these verses.

* L. 5.

*Sed quibus ille modis coniectus materiai,
 Fundarit cælum ac terram, pontique profunda,
 Solisque & lunæ cursus, ex ordine ponam.
 Nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
 Ordine se quæque, atque sagaci mente locarunt,
 Nec quos quæque darent motus pepigere profecto :
 Sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
 Ex infinito jam tempore percita plagis
 Ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri,
 Omnimodisque coire, atque omnia pertentare,
 Quæcunque inter se possent congressa creare :
 Propterea fit, uti magnum vulgata per ævum
 Omnigenos cætus, & motus experiundo,
 Tandem ea conveniant, quæ ut convenere, repente
 Magnarum rerum fiunt exordia sæpe,
 Terrai, maris & cæli, generisque animantum.*

Thus be like a good *Poet*, but a very bad maker and contriver of the World. For I appeal to any man of reason whether any thing can be more unreasonable, than obstinately to impute an effect to chance which carries in the very face of it all the arguments and characters of a wise design, and contrivance? Was ever any considerable work, in which there was required a great variety of parts, and a regular and orderly disposition of those parts, done by chance? Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thousand instances, and not fail in any one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a set of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact *Poem*, yea or so much as make a good discourse in *Prose*? And may not a little *Book* be as easily made by chance, as this great *Volume* of the World? How long might a man be in sprinkling colours upon Canvas with a careless hand, before they would happen to make the exact *Picture* of a man? And is a man easier made by chance than his *Picture*? How long might twenty thousand *blind men*, which should be sent out from the several remote parts of *England*, wander up and down before they would all meet upon *Salisbury-plains* and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an *Army*? And yet this is much more easy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter should rendezvous themselves into a world. A man that sees *Henry the Seventh's Chappel* at *Westminster* might with as good reason maintain (yea with much better, considering the vast difference betwixt that little structure and the huge fabrick of the world) that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the stones did by chance grow into those curious figures into which they seem to have been cut and graven; and that upon a time (as tales usually begin) the materials of that building, the stone, mortar, timber, iron, lead and glass, happily met together, and very fortunately rang'd themselves into that delicate order in which we see them now so close compacted that it must be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that should advance such an opinion as this, and write a *Book* for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad: but yet with a little more reason than any man can have to say that the world was made by chance: or that the first men grew up out of the earth as plants do now. For can any thing be more ridiculous and against

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all reason, than to ascribe the production of men to the first fruitfulness of the earth, without so much as one instance and experiment in any Age or History to countenance so monstrous a Supposition? The thing is at first sight so gross and palpable, that no Discourse about it can make it more apparent. And yet these shameful *beggars of Principles*, who give this precarious account of the original of things, assume to themselves to be the men of reason, the *great wits* of the world, the only *cautious* and wary persons that hate to be imposed upon, that must have convincing evidence for every thing, and can admit of nothing without a clear demonstration for it.

II. *Speculative atheism* is unreasonable, because it gives no reasonable account of the *universal consent* of mankind in this apprehension, *that there is a God*. That men do generally believe a God, and have done in all Ages, the present experience of the world, and the records of former times do abundantly testify. Now how comes this persuasion to have gained so universal a possession of the mind of Man, and to have found such general entertainment in all Nations, even those that are most barbarous? If there be no such thing as God in the world, how comes it to pass that this object doth continually encounter our understandings? Whence is it that we are so perpetually haunted with the apparition of a Deity, and followed with it wherever we go? If it be not natural to the mind of man but proceeds from some accidental Distemper of our understandings, how comes it to be so universal that no differences of age, or temper, or education can wear it out, and set any considerable number of men free from it? Into what can we resolve this strong inclination of mankind to this error and mistake? How come all Nations to be thus seduced? It is altogether unimaginable but that the reason of so universal a consent in all places and ages of the world, and among all differences of persons, should be one and constant. But no one and constant reason of this can be given, but from the nature of man's mind and understanding which hath this notion of a Deity born with it and stamped upon it; or which is all one, is of such a frame that in the free use and exercise of it self it will find out God: And what more reasonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon all reasonable creatures, that they may know to whom they belong, and may acknowledge the *Author* of their beings? This seems to be a credible and satisfactory account of so *universal a consent* in this matter. But now what doth the *Atheist* resolve this into? He is not at one with himself what account to give of it, nor can it be expected he should. For he that will overlook the true reason of a thing which usually is but one, may easily find many false ones, error being infinite. But there are *three* which he principally relies upon, *fear, tradition, and policy of State*. I shall briefly consider these.

First, He would make us believe that this apprehension of a God doth spring from an infinite *jealousy* in the mind of man, and an endless fear of the worst that may happen; according to that *divine saying* of the Poet, which he can never sufficiently admire,

Primum in orbe Deos fecit timor, ———

Fear first made Gods. So that it is granted on both sides that the *fear* of a Deity doth universally possess the minds of men. Now the question is, whether

whether it be more likely that the existence of a God should be the cause of this fear, or that this fear should be the cause why men imagine there is a God? if there be a God who hath impressed this image of himself upon the mind of Man, there's great reason why all men should stand in awe of him: But if there be no God, it is not easy to conceive how fear should create an universal confidence and assurance in men that there is one. For, whence should this fear come? It must be either from without, from the suggestion of others who first tell us there is such a *being* and then our fear believes it, or else it must arise from within, from the nature of man which is apt to fancy dreadful and terrible things. If from the suggestion of others who tell us so, the question returns, who told *them* so? and will never be satisfied till the first Author of this report be found out. So that this account of *fear* resolves it self into *tradition*, which shall be spoken to in its proper place. But if it be said that this fear ariseth from within, from the nature of man which is apt to imagine dreadful things, this likewise is liable to inexplicable difficulties. For, *First*, The proper object of fear, is something that is dreadful, that is, something that threatens men with harm or danger; and that in God must either be power or justice; and such an object as this fear indeed may create: But goodness and mercy are essential to the notion of a God as well as power and justice: now how should fear put men upon fancying a being that is infinitely good and merciful? No man hath reason to be afraid of such a being, as such. So that the *Atheist* must join another cause to fear, *viz.* hope, to enable men to create this imagination of a God. And what would the product of these two contrary passions be? the imagination of a being which we should fear would do us as much harm as we could hope it would do us good; which would be *quid pro quo*, and which our reason would oblige us to lay aside so soon as we have fancied it, because it would signify just nothing. But, *secondly*, suppose fear alone could do it; how comes the mind of man to be subject to such groundless and unreasonable fears? The *Aristotelian* Atheist will say, it always was so; But this is to affirm, and not to give any account of a thing. The *Epicurean* Atheist, if he will speak consonantly to himself, must say that there happened in the original constitution of the first men such a contexture of *Atoms* as do naturally dispose men to these panick fears; unless he will say that the first men when they grew out of the earth and afterwards broke loose from their root, finding themselves weak and naked and unarmed, and meeting with several fierce Creatures stronger than themselves, they were put in such a fright as did a little distemper their understandings and let loose their imaginations to endless suspicions and unbounded jealousies, which did at last settle in the conceit of an invisible *being* infinitely powerful, and able to do them harm; and being fully possess'd with this apprehension (nothing being more ordinary than for crazed persons to believe their own fancies) they became religious; and afterwards when mankind began to be propagated in the way of generation, then Religion obliged them to instil these *Principles* into their Children in their tender years that so they might make the greater impression upon them; and this course having been continued ever since, the notion of a God hath been kept up in the world. This is very suitable to *Epicurus* his *Hypothesis* of the original of men; but if any man think fit to say thus, I cannot think it fit to confute him. *Thirdly*, whether men were from all eternity such timorous and fanciful Creatures, or happened to be made so in the first constitution of things, it seems however that this *fear* of a Deity hath a foundation in nature. And if it be natural, ought we not rather to conclude that there is some ground and reason for these *fears*, and that nature hath not

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planted

planted them in us to no purpose, than that they are vain and groundless: There is no principle that *Aristotle* (the great asserter of the eternity of the world) doth more frequently inculcate than this, *That nature doth nothing in vain*; and the *Atheist* himself is forc'd to acknowledge (and so every man must who attentively considers the frame of the world) That altho things were made by chance, yet they have happen'd as well as if the greatest wisdom had the ordering and contriving of them. And surely wisdom would never have planted such a vain principle as the fear of a Deity in the nature of man, if there had not been a God in the World.

Secondly, If *fear* be not a sufficient account of this universal consent, the *Atheist* thinks it may very probably be resolved into *universal Tradition*. But this likewise is liable to great exception. For, whence came this Tradition? It must begin some time, it must have its original from some body; and it were very well worth our knowing who that man was that first raised this spirit which all the reason of mankind could never conjure down since. *Where* did he live, and *when*? In what *Countrey*, in what *Age* of the world? *What was his name, or his son's name, that we may know him?* This the *Atheist* can give no punctual account of; only he imagines it not improbable that somebody long ago (no body knows when) beyond the memory of all Ages did start such a notion in the world and that it hath past for current ever since, But if this *Tradition* be granted so very ancient as to have been before all Books and to be elder than any History, it may for any thing any body can tell have been from the beginning; and then it is much more likely to be a notion which was bred in the mind of man and born with him, than a *Tradition* transmitted from hand to hand through all Generations; especially if we consider how many rude and barbarous Nations there are in the world which consent in the opinion of a God, and yet have scarce any certain *Tradition* of any thing that was done among them but two or three Ages before.

Thirdly, But if neither of these be satisfactory, he hath one way more; which altho it signify little to men of sober and severe Reason, yet it very unhappily hits the jealous and suspicious humour of the generality of men, who from the experience they have had of themselves and others, are very apt to suspect that every body, but especially their *Superiors* and *Governors*, have a design to impose upon them for their own ends. In short, it is this; that this noise about a God is a mere State-Engine and a Politick device, invented at first by some great Prince or Minister of State, to keep People in awe and order. And if so, from hence (saith the *Atheist*) we may easily apprehend how from such an original it might be generally propagated and become universally current, having the stamp of publick Authority upon it. Besides, that people have always been found easy to comply with the inclinations of their *Prince*. And from hence likewise we may see the reason why this notion had continued so long. For being found by experience to be so excellent an instrument of government we may be sure it would always be cherished and kept up.

And now he *triumphs*, and thinks the business is very clear: Thus it was, some time or other, (most probably towards the beginning of the world, if it had a beginning, when all mankind was under one universal Monarch) some great *Nebuchadnezzar* set up this *Image* of a *Deity*, and commanded *all people and Nations to fall down and worship it*: And this being found a successful device to awe people into obedience to government it hath been continued to this day, and is like to last to the end of the World. To this fine Conjecture I have these four things to say:

I. That

1. That all this is mere conjecture and supposition; *he* cannot bring the least shadow of proof or evidence for any one tittle of it.

2. This supposition grants the opinion of a God to conduce very much to the support of government and order in the world; and consequently to be very beneficial to mankind. So that the Atheist cannot but acknowledge that it is great pity that it should not be true, and that it is the common interest of mankind, if there were but probable Arguments for it, not to admit of any slight reasons against it; and to punish all those who would seduce men to Atheism, as the great disturbers of the world and pests of humane Society.

3. This supposition can have nothing of certainty in it unless this be true, *that whoever makes a politick advantage of other mens principles ought to be presumed to contrive those principles into them.* Whereas it is much more common (because more easy,) for men to serve their own ends of those principles or opinion which they do not put into men but find there. So that if the question of a God were to be decided by the probability of this conjecture, (which the Atheist applauds himself most in) it would be concluded in the affirmative; It being much more likely, since Politicians reap the advantages of obedience and a more ready submission to government from mens believing that there is a God, that they found the minds of men prepossessed to their hands with the notion of a God, than that they planted it there.

4. We have as much evidence of the contrary to this supposition as such a thing is capable of, *viz.* that it was not an *arcanum imperii*, a secret of government to propagate the Belief of a God among the people when the Governors themselves knew it to be a cheat. For we find in the Histories of all Ages of which we have any records, (and of other Ages we cannot possibly judge) that Princes have not been more secure from troubles of conscience and the fears of Religion and the terrors of another world, (nay many of them more subject to these) than other men, as I could give many instances, and those no mean ones: What made *Caligula* creep under the bed when it thunder'd? What made *Tiberius*, that great master of the *crafts of government* complain so much of the grievous *stings* and *lashes* he felt in his Conscience? What made *Cardinal Woolsey* (that great *Minister of State* in our own Nation) to pour forth his soul in those sad words, *Had I been as diligent to please my God as I have been to please my King, he would not have forsaken me now in my gray hairs?* What reason for such actions and speeches, if these great men had known that Religion was but a cheat? But if they knew nothing of this secret, I think we may safely conclude that the notion of a God did not come from the Court, that it was not the invention of Politicians and a juggle of State to cozen the people into obedience.

And now from all this that hath been said it seems to be very evident, that the general consent of mankind in this apprehension *that there is a God* must in all reason be ascribed to some more certain and universal cause than *fear or tradition or State-policy*, *viz.* to *this*, that God himself hath wrought this image of himself upon the mind of man, and so woven it into the very frame of his being that (like *Phidias* his Picture in *Minerva's* Shield) it can never totally be defaced without the ruin of humane nature.

I know but one *Objection* that this discourse is liable to, which is this; That the universal consent of mankind in the apprehension of a God is no more an Argument that *He* really is, than the general agreement of so many Nations for so many Ages in the worship of many Gods is an Argument that there are many.

To this I answer, 1. That the generality of the *Philosophers* and wise men of all Nations and Ages, did dissent from the multitude in these things.

They believed but one Supreme Deity, which with respect to the various benefits men received from him had several titles bestowed upon him. And altho they did servilely comply with the people in worshipping God, by sensible images and representations, yet it appears by their writings that they despised this way of worship as superstitious and unsuitable to the nature of God. So that *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* are far from being able to pretend to universal consent from their having had the vote of the multitude in most Nations for several Ages together. Because the opinion of the vulgar separated from the consent and approbation of the wise, signifies no more than a great many Cyphers would do without figures.

2. The gross ignorance and mistakes of the *Heathen* about God and his worship are a good argument that there is a God; because they shew that men sunk into the most degenerate condition, into the greatest blindness and darkness imaginable, do yet retain some sense and awe of a Deity; that Religion is a property of our natures and that the notion of a Deity is intimate to our understandings and sticks close to them, seeing men will rather have any God than none; and rather than want a Deity they will worship any thing.

3. That there have been so many false Gods devis'd, is rather an argument that there is a true one than that there is none. There would be no counterfeits but for the sake of something that is real. For tho all pretenders seem to be what they really are not, yet they pretend to be something that really is. For to counterfeit is to put on the likeness and appearance of some real excellency. There would be no Brass money if there were not good and lawful money. *Bristol Stones* would not pretend to be Diamonds, if there never had been any Diamonds. Those *Idols* in *Henry* the seventh's time (as *Sir Francis Bacon* calls them) *Lambert Symnel* and *Perkin Warbeck*, had never been set up if there had not once been a real *Plantagenet* and *Duke of York*. So the *Idols* of the *Heathen* though they be set up in affront to the true God, yet they rather prove that there is one than the contrary.

III. *Speculative Atheism* is absurd, because it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *Aristotle* hath long since well observed, how unreasonable it is to expect the same kind of proof and evidence for every thing, which we have for some things. *Mathematical* things, being of an abstracted nature are capable of the clearest and strictest *Demonstration*: But *Conclusions in Natural Philosophy* are capable of proof by an *Induction* of experiments; things of a moral nature by moral arguments; and matters of fact by credible testimony. And tho none of these be capable of that strict kind of demonstration, which *Mathematical* matters are; yet have we an undoubted assurance of them, when they are proved by the best arguments that things of that kind will bear. No man can demonstrate to me (unless we will call every argument that is fit to convince a wise man a demonstration) that there is such an *Island in America* as *Jamaica*. Yet upon the testimony of credible persons who have seen it, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as I am from doubting of the clearest *Mathematical* demonstration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm Principle by all those who pretend to be certain of any thing at all: That when any thing in any of these kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as a thing of that kind is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing.

Now to apply this to the present case. The being of a God is not *Mathematically* demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should, because only *Mathematical*

thematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved *immediately* by *sense*, because *God* being supposed to be a pure spirit cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a *God* as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reason expect to have, supposing that he were. For let us suppose there were such a *Being* as an *Infinite Spirit*, cloathed with all possible perfection, *that is*, as *good* and *wise* and *powerful*, &c. as can be imagined: what conceivable ways are there whereby we should come to be assured that there is such a *Being*? but either by an internal impression of the notion of a *God* upon our minds; or else by such external and visible effects as our Reason tells us must be attributed to some cause, and which we cannot without great violence to our understandings attribute to any other cause but such a *Being* as we conceive *God* to be, *that is*, one that is infinitely *good*, and *wise*, and *powerful*? Now we have this double assurance that there is a *God*; and greater, or other than this the thing is not capable of: If *God* should assume a body and present himself before our eyes, this might amaze us but could not give us any rational assurance that there is an *Infinite Spirit*. If he should work a *Miracle*; this could not in reason convince an *Atheist* more than the arguments he already hath for it. If the *Atheist* then were to *ask a sign in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath*, what could he desire *God* to do for his conviction more than he hath already done? Could he desire him to work a greater *Miracle* than to make a world? Why, if *God* should carry this *perverse man* out of the limits of this world, and shew him a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, springing out of nothing, he might say that innumerable parts of matter chanc'd just then to rally together and to form themselves into this new world, and that *God* did not make it. Thus you see that we have all the rational assurance of a *God* that the thing is capable of, and that *Atheism* is absurd and unreasonable in requiring more.

IV. The *Atheist* is unreasonable, because he pretends to know that which no man can know, and to be certain of that which nobody can be certain of; that is, *that there is no God*, and which is consequent upon this (as I shall shew afterwards) *that it is not possible there should be one*. And the *Atheist* must pretend to know this certainly. For it were the greatest folly in the world for a man to deny and despise a *God*, if he be not certain that *He* is not. Now whoever pretends to be certain that there is no *God* hath this great disadvantage, he pretends to be certain of a pure *Negative*. But of *negatives* we have far the least certainty, and they are usually hardest, and many times impossible to be proved. Indeed such *negatives* as only deny some particular mode or manner of a thing's existence, a man may have a certainty of *them*; because when we see things to be, we may see what they are, and in what manner they do or do not exist. For Instance, we may be certain that man is not a creature that hath wings, because this only concerns the manner of his existence; and we seeing what he is, may certainly know that he is not so, or so. But *pure negatives*, that is, such as absolutely deny the existence of things, or the possibility of their existence, can never be proved; For after all that can be said against a thing this will still be true, that many things possibly are which we know not of, and that many more things may be than are; and if so, after all our arguments against a thing it will be uncertain whether it be or not. And this is universally true, unless the thing denied to be do plainly imply a contradiction; from which I have already shewn the notion of a *God* to be free. Now the *Atheist* pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*, that there is no such being as *God*, and that it is not possible there should be: But no man can reasonably pretend to know thus much, but he must

must pretend to know all things that are or can be; which if any man should be so vain as to pretend to, yet it is to be hoped that nobody would be so weak as to believe him.

V. *Speculative Atheism* is unreasonable, because it contradicts it self. There is this great contradiction in the denial of a God. He that denies a God, says that *that* is *impossible* which yet must be granted to be *possible*. He says it is *impossible* that there should be such a *Being* as God, in saying that *de facto* there is no such *being*. For *eternity* being essential to the notion of a God, if there be not a God already it is impossible now that there should be one; because such a being as is supposed to be essentially eternal and without beginning cannot now *begin to be*. And yet he must grant it possible that there should be such a *being*, because it is possible there should be such a *being* as hath all possible perfection: and such a *being* as this is that which we call *God*, and is that very thing which the Atheist denies and others affirm to be. For he that denies a God, must deny such a being as all the world describe God to be; and this is the general notion which all men have of God, *that he is a being as perfect as is possible*; that is, endued with all such perfections as do not imply a contradiction, which none of those perfections which we attribute to God do, as I have already prov'd.

II. *Speculative Atheism* as it is *unreasonable*, so is it a most *imprudent* and uncomfortable opinion: And that upon these *two* accounts. *First*, because it is against the present interest and happiness of mankind. *Secondly*, because it is infinitely hazardous and unsafe in the issue.

I. It is against the present interest and happiness of mankind. If *Atheism* were the general Opinion of the World, it would be infinitely prejudicial to the peace and happiness of *humane Society*, and would open a wide door to all manner of confusion and disorder. But this I shall not now insist upon, because I design a particular discourse of *that* by it self.

I shall at present content my self to shew how uncomfortable an opinion this would be to particular persons. For nothing can be more evident than that *man* is not sufficient of himself to his own happiness. He is liable to many evils and miseries which he can neither prevent nor redress. He is full of wants which he cannot supply, and compass'd about with infirmities which he cannot remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never sufficiently provide against. Consider *man* without the protection and conduct of a *superior Being*, and he is secure of nothing that he enjoys in this world, and uncertain of every thing that he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eagerly to desire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain*. He courts happiness in a thousand shapes, and the faster he pursues it the faster it flies from him. His hopes and expectations are bigger than his enjoyments, and his fears and jealousies more troublesome than the evils themselves which he is so much afraid of. He is liable to a great many inconveniences every moment of his life, and is continually insecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it self. And besides all this, after all his endeavours to the contrary, he finds himself naturally to dread a *superior Being* that can defeat all his designs, and disappoint all his hopes, and make him miserable beyond all his fears. He has oftentimes secret misgivings concerning another life after this, and fearful apprehensions of an invisible Judge; and thereupon he is full of anxiety concerning his condition in another world, and sometimes plung'd into that anguish and despair that he grows weary of himself. So that the *Atheist* deprives himself of all the comfort that the apprehensions of a God can give a man, and yet is liable to all the trouble and disquiet of those apprehensions.

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I do not say that these Inconveniences do happen to all; but every one is in danger of them. For man's nature is evidently so contriv'd as does plainly discover how unable he is to make himself happy. So that he must necessarily look abroad and seek for happiness somewhere else. And if there be no *superior Being*, in whose care of him he may repose his confidence and quiet his mind; If he have no comfortable expectations of another life to sustain him under the evils and calamities he is liable to in this world, he is certainly *of all creatures the most miserable*. There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, or want, or pain, or some other sort of calamity, that we can have no hopes of relief or comfort but from *God* alone: none in all the world to flee to, but *Him*. And what would men do in such a case if it were not for *God*? Humane nature is most certainly liable to desperate exigences, and he is not happy that is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is bad to be reduc'd to such a condition as to be destitute of all comfort. And yet men are many times brought to that extremity that if it were not for *God* they would not know what to do with themselves, or how to enjoy themselves for one hour, or to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable considerations under their present anguish and sufferings. All men naturally fly to *God* in extremity, and the most atheistical person in the world when he is forsaken of all hopes of any other relief is forc'd to acknowledge him and would be glad to have such a friend.

Can it then be a wise and reasonable design to endeavour to banish the belief of a *God* out of the world? Not to say how impious it is in respect of *God*, nothing can be more malicious to men, and more effectually undermine the only foundation of our happiness. For if there were no *God* in the world man would be in a much more wretched and disconsolate condition, than the creatures below him. For they are only sensible of present pain, and when it is upon them they bear it as they can. But they are not at all apprehensive of evils at a distance, nor tormented with the fearful prospect of what may befall them hereafter: nor are they plung'd into despair upon the consideration that the evils they lye under are like to continue, and are incapable of a remedy. And as they have no apprehension of these things, so they need no comfort against them. But mankind is liable to all the same evils, and many others; which are so much the greater, because they are aggravated and set on by the restless workings of our minds, and exasperated by the smart reflections and frettings of our own thoughts: And if there be no *God* we are wholly without comfort under all these, and without any other remedy than what time will give. For if the providence of *God* be taken away, what security have we against those innumerable dangers and mischiefs to which human nature is continually expos'd? What consolation under them, when we are reduc'd to that condition that no creature can give us any hopes of relief? But if we believe that there is a *God* that takes care of us, and we be careful to please him, this cannot but be a mighty comfort to us, both under the present sense of affliction, and the apprehension of evils at a distance. For in that case, we are secure of one of these three things. Either that *God* by his providence will prevent the evils we fear, if that be best for us: Or that he will support us under them when they are present, and add to our strength as he increaseth our burden: Or that he will make them the occasion of a greater good to us, by turning them either to our advantage in this world, or the increase of our happiness in the next. Now every one of these considerations has a great deal of comfort in it, for which if there were no *God* there could be no ground. Nay, on the contrary the most real foundation of our unhappiness would be laid in our Reason; and we should be

be so much more miserable than the beasts, by how much we have a quicker apprehension and a deeper consideration of things.

So that if a man had arguments sufficient to persuade him that there is no God (as there is infinite reason to the contrary) yet the belief of a God is so necessary to the comfort and happiness of our lives, that a wise man could not but be heartily troubled to quit so pleasant an error, and to part with a delusion which is apt to yield such unspeakable satisfaction to the mind of man. Did but men consider the true notion of God, he would appear to be so lovely a Being, and so full of goodness and of all desirable perfections, that even those very persons who are of such irregular understandings as not to believe that there is a God, yet could not (if they understood themselves) refrain from wishing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really desirable to every man, that there should be such a *Being* in the world as takes care of the frame of it, that it do not run into confusion, and in that disorder ruin mankind? That there should be such a Being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as understands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greatest straits, when nothing else can; to preserve us in our greatest dangers, to assist us against our worst enemies, and to comfort us under our sharpest sufferings, when all other things set themselves against us? Is it not every man's interest, that there should be such a Governor of the world as really designs our happiness, and hath omitted nothing that is necessary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is best for our selves? that will punish any man that should go about to injure us, or to deal otherwise with us than himself in the like case would be dealt withal by us? In a word, such a one as is ready to be reconcil'd to us when we have offended him, and is so far from taking little advantages against us for every failing, that he is willing to pardon our most wilful miscarriages upon our Repentance and amendment? And we have reason to believe God to be such a Being, if he be at all.

Why then should any man be troubled that there is such a Being as this, or think himself concern'd to shut him out of the world? How could such a Governor as this be wanting in the world, that is so great a comfort and security to mankind and *the confidence of all the ends of the earth*? If God be such a being as I have describ'd, wo to the world if it were without him. This would be a thousand times greater loss to mankind and of more dismal consequence, and if it were true, ought to affect us with more grief and horror than the extinguishing of the Sun.

Let but all things be well consider'd, and I am very confident that if a wise and considerate man were left to himself and his own choice, to wish the greatest good to himself he could devise; after he had search'd heaven and earth, the *sum* of all his wishes would be this, *that there were just such a being as God is*; Nor would he chuse any other benefactor, or friend, or protector for himself, or governor for the whole world, than infinite power conducted and managed by infinite wisdom and goodness and justice, which is the true *notion* of a God.

Nay, so necessary is God to the happiness of mankind, that tho there were no God, yet the Atheist himself upon second thoughts would judge it convenient that the generality of men should believe that there is one. For when the Atheist had attain'd his end, and (if it were a thing possible) had blotted the notion of a God out of the minds of men, mankind would in all probability grow so melancholy and so unruly a thing, that *he himself* would

would think it fit in policy to contribute his best endeavours to the restoring of men to their former belief. Thus hath God secur'd the belief of *himself* in the world, against all attempts to the contrary ; not only by riveting the notion of himself into our natures, but likewise by making the belief of his being necessary to the peace and tranquility of our minds, and to the quiet and happiness of Human Society.

So that if we consult our reason, we cannot but believe that there is ; if our interest, we cannot but heartily wish that there were such a Being as God in the world. Every thing within us and without us gives notice of Him. His name is written upon our hearts ; and in every creature there are some prints and footsteps of him. Every moment we feel our dependance upon Him, and do by daily experience find that we can neither be happy without Him, nor think our selves so.

I confess, it is not a wicked man's interest, if he resolve to continue such, that there should be a God ; but then it is not men's interest to be wicked. It is for the general good of human Society, and consequently of particular persons, to be *true* and *just* ; it is for men's health to be *temperate* ; and so I could instance in all other virtues. But this is the mystery of Atheism, men are wedded to their lusts and resolv'd upon a wicked course ; and so it becomes their interest to wish there were no God, and to believe so if they can. Whereas if men were minded to live righteously and soberly and virtuously in the world, *to believe a God* would be no hindrance or prejudice to any such design ; but very much for the advancement and furtherance of it. Men that are good and virtuous do easily believe a God ; so that it is vehemently to be suspected, that nothing but the strength of men's lusts, and the power of vicious inclinations do sway their minds, and set a *byass* upon their understandings toward Atheism.

2. Atheism is *imprudent*, because *it is unsafe in the issue*. The Atheist contends against the religious man that there is no God ; but upon strange inequality and odds, for *he* ventures his eternal interest ; whereas the Religious Man ventures only the loss of his lusts, (which it is much better for him to be without) or at the utmost of some temporal convenience ; and all this while is inwardly more contented and happy, and usually more healthful, and perhaps meets with more respect and faithfuller Friends, and lives in a more secure and flourishing condition, and more free from the evils and punishments of this world, than the Atheistical person does ; however, it is not much that he ventures : And after this life, if there be no God, is as well as he ; but if there be a God, is infinitely better, even as much as unspeakable and eternal happiness is better than extreme and endless misery. So that if the Arguments for and against a God were equal, and it were an even question whether there were one or not ; yet the hazard and danger is so infinitely unequal, that in point of prudence and interest every man were obliged to incline to the affirmative : And whatever doubts he might have about it, to chuse the safest side of the question, and to make that the principle to live by. For, he that acts wisely and is a thoroughly prudent man, will be provided against all events, and will take care to secure the main chance whatever happens ; but the Atheist, in case things should fall out contrary to his belief and expectation, he hath made no provision for this case. If contrary to his confidence it should prove in the issue that there is a God, the man is lost and undone for ever. If the Atheist when he dies should find that his soul remains after his body, and has only quitted its lodging, how will this man be amazed and blank'd when contrary to his expectation, he shall find himself in a new and strange place, amidst a world of spirits, entred
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upon an everlasting and unchangeable state? How sadly will the man be disappointed when he finds all things otherwise than he had flated and determined them in this world? When he comes to appear before that God whom he hath denied, and against whom he hath spoken as despightful things as he could, who can imagine the pale and guilty looks of this man, and how he will shiver and tremble *for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty*? How will he be surprized with terrors on every side, to find himself thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a state of ruin and desperation? And thus things may happen for all this man's confidence now. For our belief or disbelief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fancy things into being, or make them vanish into nothing by the stubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as fullen as we are, and will be what they are whatever we think of them. And if there be a God, a man cannot by an obstinate disbelief of him make him cease to be, any more than a man can put out the Sun by winking.

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could, endeavour'd to shew the *ignorance and folly of speculative Atheism* in denying the *existence of God*. And now it will be less needful to speak of the other *two principles of Religion*, the *immortality of the Soul*, and *future Rewards*. For no man can have any reasonable scruple about *these*, who believes that there is a God. Because no man that owns the existence of an *infinite spirit* can doubt of the possibility of a *finite spirit*, that is, such a thing as is *immaterial* and does not contain any principle of *corruption* in it self. And there is no man that believes the goodness of God, but must be inclin'd to think that he hath made some things for as long a duration as they are capable of. Nor can any man, that acknowledgeth the *holy and just* providence of God, and that he loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and that he is a *Magistrate and Governor* of the World, and consequently concerned to countenance the obedience, and to punish the violation of his Laws; and that does withal consider the promiscuous dispensations many times of God's Providence in this world; I say, no man that acknowledges all this, can think it unreasonable to conclude, that after this life good men shall be rewarded, and sinners punished. I have done with the *first* sort of irreligious persons, the *speculative Atheist*. I shall speak but briefly of the other.

Secondly, The *practical Atheist*, who is wicked and irreligious, notwithstanding he does in some sort believe that there is a God, and a future state, he is likewise guilty of prodigious folly. The *principle* of the *speculative Atheist* argues more *ignorance*, but the *practice* of the *other* argues greater *folly*. Not to believe a God, and another life, for which there is so much evidence of Reason is great ignorance and folly; but 'tis the highest madness when a man does believe these things, to live as if he did not believe them; When a man does not doubt but that there is a God, and that according as he demeans himself towards him he will make him happy or miserable for ever, yet to live so as if he were certain of the contrary, and as no man in reason can live but he that is well assured that there is no God. It was a shrewd saying of the old *Monk*, that two kind of Prisons would serve for all offenders in the world, an *Inquisition* and a *Bedlam*: If any man should deny the being of a God and the immortality of the soul, such a one should be put into the first of these the *Inquisition*, as being a desperate *Heretick*; but if any man should profess to believe these things, and yet allow himself in any known wickedness, such a one should be put into *Bedlam*; because there cannot be a greater folly and madness than for a man in matters of greatest moment and concernment to act against his best reason and understanding, and

and by his life to contradict his belief. Such a man does perish with his eyes open, and knowingly undoes himself; he runs upon the greatest dangers which he clearly sees to be before him, and precipitates himself into those evils which he professes to believe to be real and intolerable; and wilfully neglects the obtaining of that unspeakable good and happiness which he is persuaded is certain and attainable. Thus much for the *second* way of Confirmation.

III. The *third* way of confirmation shall be, by endeavouring to vindicate Religion from those common *imputations* which seem to charge it with *ignorance* or *imprudence*. And they are chiefly these three.

1. *Credulity.*

2. *Singularity.*

3. *Making a foolish Bargain.*

First, Credulity: Say they, the foundation of Religion is the belief of those things for which we have no sufficient reason, and consequently of which we can have no good assurance; as the belief of a *God*, and of a *future state* after this life; things which we never saw, nor did experience, nor ever spoke with any body that did. Now it seems to argue too great a forwardness and easiness of belief to assent to any thing upon insufficient grounds.

To this I answer,

1. That if there be such a Being as a God, and such a thing as a future state after this life, it cannot (as I said before) in reason be expected that we should have the evidence of sense for such things: For he that believes a God, believes such a Being as hath all perfections, among which this is one, that he is a spirit; and consequently that he is invisible, and cannot be seen. He likewise that believes another life after this, professeth to believe a state of which in this life we have no trial and experience. Besides, if this were a good objection, that no man ever saw these things, it strikes at the Atheist as well as us. For no man ever saw the World to be from eternity; nor *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, of which notwithstanding he believes the World was made.

2. We have the best evidence for these things which they are capable of at present, supposing they were.

3. Those who deny these *principles*, must be much more credulous, that is, believe things upon incomparably less evidence of reason. The *Atheist* looks upon all that are religious as a company of credulous fools. But *he*, for his part, pretends to be wiser than to believe any thing for company; he cannot entertain things upon those slight grounds which move other men; if you would win his assent to any thing, you must give him a clear demonstration for it. Now there's no way to deal with this *man of reason*, this rigid exactor of strict demonstration for things which are not capable of it, but by shewing him that he is an hundred times more credulous, that he begs more principles, takes more things for granted without offering to prove them, and assents to more strange conclusions upon weaker grounds, than those whom he so much accuseth of credulity.

And to evidence this, I shall briefly give you an account of the *Atheist's Creed*, and present you with a Catalogue of the *fundamental Articles* of his Faith. *He believes* that there is no God, nor possibly can be, and consequently that the wise as well as unwise of all ages have been mistaken, except himself and a few more. *He believes* that either all the world have been frightened with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have most unnaturally conspired together to cozen themselves; or that this notion of a God is a trick of policy, tho the greatest *Princes* and *Politicians* do not at this day know so much, nor have done time out of mind. *He believes*, either

that the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them had no Original cause of their being, or else that they were made by chance and happened he knows not how to be as they are; and that in this last shuffling of matter all things have by great good fortune fallen out as happily and as regularly as if the greatest wisdom had contriv'd them, but yet he is resolv'd to believe that there was no wisdom in the contrivance of them. He believes, that *matter* of it self is utterly void of all *sense, understanding and liberty*; but for all that he is of opinion that the parts of matter may now and then happen to be so conveniently dispos'd, as to have all these qualities, and most dextrously to perform all those *fine and free operations* which the ignorant attribute to Spirits.

This is the sum of his belief. And it is a wonder, that there should be found any person pretending to reason or wit that can assent to such a heap of absurdities, which are so gross and palpable that they may be felt. So that if every man had his due, it will certainly fall to the Atheist's share to be the most credulous person, that is, to believe things upon the slightest reasons. For he does not pretend to prove any thing of all this, only he finds himself, he knows not why, inclin'd to believe so and to laugh at those that do not.

II. The *second imputation* is *singularity*; the affectation whereof is unbecoming a wise man. To this charge I answer,

1. If by *Religion* be meant the *belief* of the *principles* of Religion, that there is a *God*, and a *providence*, that *our souls are immortal*, and that there are *rewards* to be expected after this life; these are so far from being *singular* opinions, that they are and always have been the *general* opinion of mankind, even of the most *barbarous* Nations. Inasmuch, that the Histories of ancient times do hardly furnish us with the names of above five or six persons who denied a God. And *Lucretius* acknowledgeth that *Epicurus* was the first who did oppose those great *foundations* of Religion, the *providence* of God, and the *immortality* of the Soul. *Primum Grajus homo*, &c. meaning *Epicurus*.

2. If by Religion be meant a living up to those principles, that is, to act conformably to our best reason and understanding, and to live as it does become those who do believe a God and a future state; this is acknowledged, even by those who live otherwise, to be the part of every wise man; and the contrary to be the very *madness of folly*, and height of distraction: Nothing being more ordinary than for men who live wickedly to acknowledge that they ought to do otherwise.

3. Though according to the common course and practice of the world it be somewhat *singular* for men truly and thoroughly to live up to the principles of their *Religion*, yet *singularity* in this matter is so far from being a reflection upon any man's prudence that it is a *singular* commendation of it. In two cases *singularity* is very commendable.

1. When there is a necessity of it in order to a man's greatest interest and happiness. I think it to be a reasonable account for any man to give why he does not live as the greatest part of the World do, that he has no mind to dye as they do and to perish with them; he is not disposed to be a fool and to be miserable for company; he has no inclination to have his last end like theirs *who know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son, and shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*.

2. It is very commendable to be *singular* in any excellency, and I have shewn that *Religion* is the greatest excellency: to be *singular* in any thing that is wise, and worthy, and excellent, is not a disparagement, but a praise: every man would chuse to be thus *singular*.

III. The *third imputation* is, that *Religion* is a *foolish bargain*; because they who are religious hazard the parting with a present and certain happiness for that which is future and uncertain. To this I answer.

1. Let

1. Let it be granted, that the assurance which we have of future rewards falls short of the evidence of sense. For I doubt not, but that saying of our Saviour, *Blessed is he who hath believed, and not seen*; and those expressions of the Apostle, *we walk by faith and not by sight*, and *faith is the evidence of things not seen*, are intended by way of abatement and diminution to the evidence of Faith, and do signify that the report and testimony of others is not so great evidence as that of our own senses: And tho' we have sufficient assurance of another state, yet no man can think we have so great evidence as if we our selves had been in the other world, and seen how all things are there.

2. We have sufficient assurance of these things, and such as may beget in us a well-grounded confidence, and frees us from all doubts of the contrary, and perswade a reasonable man to venture his greatest interests in this World upon the security that he hath of another: For,

1. We have as much assurance of these things as things future, and at a distance are capable of, and he is a very unreasonable man that would desire more: Future and invisible things are not capable of the evidence of sense; but we have the greatest rational evidence for them, and in this every reasonable man ought to rest satisfied.

2. We have as much as is abundantly sufficient to justify every man's discretion, who for the great and eternal things of another world, hazards or parts with the poor and transitory things of this life. And for the clearing of this it will be worth our considering, that the greatest affairs of this world, and the most important concernments of this life are all conducted only by *moral* demonstrations. Men every day venture their lives and estates only upon *moral* assurance. For instance, men who never were at the *East* or *West-Indies*, or in *Turky* or *Spain*, yet do venture their whole estate in traffick thither, tho' they have no *Mathematical demonstration* but only *moral assurance* that there are such places. Nay, which is more, men every day eat and drink, tho' I think no man can demonstrate out of *Euclid* or *Apollonius*, that his *Baker* or *Brewer*, or *Cook* have not conveyed poyson into his meat or drink. And that man that would be so wise and cautious as not to eat or drink till he could demonstrate this to himself, I know no other remedy for him but that in great gravity and wisdom he must dye for fear of death. And for any man to urge that tho' men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral assurance, yet there is greater assurance required to make men seek Heaven and avoid Hell, seems to me to be highly unreasonable. For such an assurance of things as will make men circumspect and careful to avoid a lesser danger, ought in all reason to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater, such an assurance as will sharpen mens desires and quicken their endeavours for the obtaining of a lesser good ought in all reason to animate men more powerfully, and to inspire them with a greater vigor and industry in the pursuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the same assurance should not operate as well in a great danger as in a less, in a great good as in a small and inconsiderable one, I can see no reason; unless men will say, that the greatness of an evil danger is an encouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatness of any good and happiness ought in reason to dishearten men from the pursuit of it.

And now I think I may with reason intreat such as are atheistically inclined, to consider these things seriously and impartially; and if there be weight in these considerations which I have offered to them to sway with reasonable men, I would beg of such that they would not suffer themselves to be byassed by prejudice or passion, or the interest of any lust or worldly advantage, to a contrary persuasion.

First,

Prov. 26.
18.

First, I would intreat them seriously and diligently to consider these things, because they are of so great moment and concernment to every man. If any thing in the world deserve our serious study and consideration, these principles of Religion do. For what can import us more to be satisfied in than whether there be a God, or not? whether our Souls shall perish with our bodies, or be immortal and shall continue for ever? And if so, whether in that eternal state which remains for men after this life, they shall not be happy or miserable for ever according as they have demeaned themselves in this world? If these things be so, they are of infinite consequence to us; and therefore it highly concerns us to enquire diligently about them, and to satisfy our minds concerning them one way or other. For these are not matters to be slightly and superficially thought upon, much less (as the way of atheistical men is) to be play'd and jested withal. There is no greater argument of a light and inconsiderate person, than profanely to scoff at Religion. It is a sign that that man hath no regard to himself, and that he is not touch'd with a sense of his own interest, who loves to be jesting with edg'd tools and to play with life and death. This is the very mad-man that *Solomon* speaks of, *who casteth firebrands, arrows and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?* To examine severely and debate seriously the principles of Religion, is a thing worthy of a wise man; but if any man shall turn Religion into raillery, and think to confute it by two or three bold jests, this man doth not render Religion, but himself ridiculous, in the opinion of all considerate men; because he sports with his own life. If the principles of Religion were doubtful and uncertain, yet they concern us so nearly that we ought to be serious in the examination of them. And tho' they were never so clear and evident, yet they may be made ridiculous by vain and frothy men; as the gravest and wisest person in the world may be abused by being put into a *fool's coat*, and the most noble and excellent Poem may be debased and made vile by being turn'd into *burlesque*. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more largely in my next discourse.

So that it concerns every man, that would not trifle away his Soul and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, with the greatest seriousness to enquire into these matters whether they be so or not, and patiently to consider the arguments which are brought for them. For many have miscarried about these things, not because there is not reason and evidence enough for them, but because they have not had patience enough to consider them.

Secondly, Consider these things impartially. All wicked men are of a party against Religion. Some lust or interest engageth them against it. Hence it comes to pass that they are apt to slight the strongest arguments that can be brought for it, and to cry up very weak ones against it. Men do generally and without difficulty assent to *Mathematical* truths, because it is no bodies interest to deny them; but men are slow to believe *moral* and *divine* Truths, because by their lusts and interest they are prejudic'd against them. And therefore you may observe that the more virtuously any man lives, and the less he is enslav'd to any lust, the more ready he is to entertain the principles of Religion.

Therefore when you are examining these matters, do not take into consideration any sensual or worldly interest, but deal clearly and impartially with your selves. Let not temporal and little advantages sway you against a greater and more durable interest. Think thus with your selves, that you have not the making of things true or false, but that the truth and existence of things is already fix'd and settled, and that the principles of Religion are already either determinately true or false before you think of them; either there is a God, or there is not; either your Souls are Immortal, or they are not;

not; one of these is certain and necessary, and is not now to be altered; the truth of things will not comply with our conceits, and bend it self to our interests. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but consider impartially what is, and (if it be) will be whether you will or no. Do not reason thus: I would fain be wicked and therefore it is my interest that there should be no God, nor no life after this; and therefore I will endeavour to prove that there is no such thing, and will shew all the favour I can to that *side* of the *question*; I will bend my understanding and wit to strengthen the negative, and will study to make it as true as I can. This is fond, because it is the way to cheat thy self; and that we may do as often as we please, but the nature of things will not be imposed upon. If then thou be as wise as thou oughtest to be, thou wilt reason thus with thy self; my highest interest is not to be deceived about these matters, therefore setting aside all other considerations I will endeavour to know the truth and yield to that.

And now it is time to draw towards a conclusion of this long discourse. And that which I have all this while been endeavouring to convince men of and to persuade them to, is no other but what God himself doth particularly recommend to us as proper for humane consideration, *unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* Whoever pretends to reason, and calls himself a *man*, is oblig'd to acknowledge God and to demean himself religiously towards him. For God is to the understanding of man as the light of the Sun is to our eyes, the first and the plainest and the most glorious object of it. He fills Heaven and earth, and every thing in them does represent him to us. Which way soever we turn our selves, we are encountred with clear evidences and sensible demonstrations of a Deity. For (as the *Apostle* reasons) *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; εἰς τὸ ἑὸν αὐτὸς ἀνὰ πολλοῦ γήραος, so that they are without excuse;* that is, those men that know not God have no apology to make for themselves. Or if men do know and believe that there is such a being as God, not to consider the proper consequences of such a Principle, not to demean our selves towards him as becomes our relation to him and dependance upon him and the duty which we naturally owe him, this is great stupidity and inconsiderateness.

Rom. i.
20.

And yet he that considers the lives and actions of the greatest part of men would verily think that they understood nothing of all this. Therefore the *Scripture* represents wicked men as without understanding. *It is a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them:* and elsewhere, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Not that they are destitute of the natural faculty of understanding, but they do not use it as they ought; they are not blind but they wink, *they detain the truth of God in unrighteousness, and tho' they know God, yet they do not glorify him as God, nor suffer the apprehensions of him to have a due influence upon their hearts and lives.*

Deut. 32.
28.
Psal. 14 4.

Men generally stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and of all things in the world hate to be accounted fools, because it is so great a reproach. The best way to avoid this imputation and to bring off the credit of our understandings is to be truly religious, *to fear the Lord, and to depart from evil.* For certainly there is no such imprudent person as he that neglects God and his soul, and is careless and slothful about his everlasting concerns; because this man acts contrary to his truest reason and best interest; he neglects his own safety, and is active to procure his own ruin; he flies from happiness and runs away from it as fast as he can, but pursues misery, and makes hast to be undone. Hence it is that *Solomon* does

does all along in the *Proverbs* give the title of *fool* to a wicked man, as if it were his proper name and the fittest character of him, because he is so eminently such : There is no fool to the sinner, who every moment ventures his Soul, and lays his everlasting interest at the stake. Every time a man provokes God he does the greatest mischief to himself that can be imagined. A mad man that cuts himself and tears his own flesh and dashes his head against the stones does not act so unreasonably as he, because he is not so sensible of what he does. Wickedness is a kind of *voluntary* frenzy and a *chosen* distraction, and every sinner does wilder and more extravagant things than any man can do that is craz'd and out of his wits, only with this sad difference that he knows better what he does. For to them who believe another life after this, an eternal state of happiness or misery in another world, (which is but a reasonable *postulatum* or demand among *Christians*) there is nothing in *Mathematicks* more demonstrable than the folly of wicked men ; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle *that the whole is greater than a part*, than that eternity and the concerns of it are to be preferred before time.

I will therefore put the matter into a temporal Case, that wicked men who understand any thing of the rules and principles of worldly wisdom may see the imprudence of an irreligious and sinful course, and be convinced *that this their way is their folly, even themselves being judges.*

Is that man wise, as to his body and his health, who only cloaths his hands but leaves his whole body naked ? who provides only against the tooth-ach, and neglects whole troops of mortal diseases that are ready to rush in upon him ? Just thus does he who takes care only for this vile body, but neglects his precious and immortal Soul ; who is very solicitous to prevent small and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care *to escape the damnation of hell.*

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal estate, that lays designs only for a day without any prospect to or provision for the Remaining part of his life ? even so does he that provides for the short time of this life, but takes no care for all Eternity, which is to be wise for a moment, but a fool for ever, and to act as untowardly and as crossly to the reason of things as can be imagined, to regard time as if it were eternity, and to neglect eternity as if it were but a short time.

Do we count him a wise man, who is wise in any thing but in his own proper profession and employment, wise for every body but himself ; who is ingenious to contrive his own misery and to do himself a mischief, but is dull and stupid as to the designing of any real benefit and advantage to himself ? Such a one is he, who is ingenious in his Calling but a bad Christian ; for Christianity is more our proper calling and profession than the very trades we live upon : and such is every sinner, who is *wise to do evil, but to do good hath no understanding.*

Is it wisdom in any man to neglect and disoblige him who is his best friend, and can be his worst enemy ? or with one weak troop to go out to meet him that comes against him with thousands of thousands, to fly a small danger and run upon a greater ? Thus does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God, *who can save or destroy him* ; who strives with his *Maker and provoketh the Lord to jealousy*, and with the small and inconsiderable forces of a man takes the field against the *mighty God, the Lord of Hosts* ; who *fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do ; but fears not him, who after he hath kill'd, can destroy both body and soul in hell* ; and thus does he who for fear of any thing in this world ventures to displease God, for in so doing he runs away from men, and *falls into the hands of the living God*, he flies from a temporal danger and leaps into Hell.

Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greatest moment and concernment neglects opportunities never to be retriev'd, who standing upon the shore, and seeing the tide making hast towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to save himself, yet will lay himself to sleep there till the cruel sea rush in upon him and overwhelm him? And is he any better who trifles away this day of God's grace and patience, and foolishly adjourns the necessary work of repentance and the weighty business of Religion to a dying hour?

And to put an end to these questions, Is he wise who hopes to attain the End without the means, nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? such is every wicked man who hopes to be blessed hereafter without being holy here, and to be happy, that is, to find a pleasure in the enjoyment of God and in the company of holy spirits by rendring himself as unsuitable and unlike to them as he can.

Wouldst thou then be truly wise? Be wise for thy self, wise for thy soul, wise for eternity. Resolve upon a religious course of life. *Fear God and depart from evil.* Look beyond things present and sensible unto things which are not seen and are eternal, labour to secure the great interests of another world, and refer all the actions of this short and dying life to that state which will shortly begin but never have an end: and this will approve it self to be wisdom at the last, whatever the world judge of it now. For not that which is approved of men now, but what shall finally be approved by God is true wisdom; that which is esteemed so by him who is the fountain and original of all wisdom, the first rule and measure, the best and most competent judge of it.

I deny not but those that are wicked and neglect Religion may think themselves wise, and may enjoy this their delusion for a while: But there is a time a coming when the most prophane and atheistical, who now account it a piece of Gallantry and an argument of a great spirit and of a more than common wit and understanding to slight God and to baffle Religion and to level all the discourses of another world with the Poetical descriptions of the Fairy-land; I say, there is a day a coming when all these witty fools shall be unhappily undeceived, and not being able to enjoy their delusion any longer shall call themselves fools for ever.

But why should I use so much importunity to persuade men to that which is so excellent, so useful, and so necessary? The thing it self hath allurements in it beyond all arguments: For if Religion be the best knowledge and wisdom I cannot offer any thing beyond this to your understandings to raise your esteem of it, I can present nothing beyond this to your affections to excite your love and desire. All that can be done is to set the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice; and if men's natural desire of wisdom and knowledge and happiness will not persuade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to use arguments; if the sight of these beauties will not charm men's affections, 'tis to no purpose to go about to compel a liking, and to urge and push forward a match to the making whereof consent is necessary. Religion is matter of our freest choice, and if men will obstinately and wilfully set themselves against it there is no remedy. *Pertinaciæ nullum remedium posuit Deus, God has provided no remedy for the obstinacy of men*; but if they will chuse to be fools and to be miserable, he will leave them to inherit their own choice and to enjoy the portion of sinners.

S E R M O N II.

The Folly of Scoffing at Religion.

2 P E T. III. 3.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.

K Nowing this first. In the verse before, the *Apostle* was speaking of a famous prophecy before the accomplishment of which this sort of men whom he calls *scoffers* should come. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour ; Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, &c.*

Mat. 24.
11.

The prophecy here spoken of is probably that famous prediction of the destruction of *Jerusalem* which is in the Prophet *Daniel*, and before the fulfilling whereof our Saviour expressly tells us *false prophets should arise and deceive many.*

Now the *scoffers* here spoken of are the *false teachers* whom the *Apostle* had been describing all along in the foregoing Chapter, *there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you.* These, he tells us, should proceed to that height of impiety as to scoff at the principles of Religion and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, *In the last days shall come scoffers walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming ?*

In speaking to these words, I shall do these three things.

1. Consider the nature of the sin here mentioned, which is *scoffing* at Religion.

2. The character of the persons that are charg'd with the guilt of this sin, they are said *to walk after their own lusts.*

3. I shall represent to you the heinousness and the aggravations of this vice.

I. First, We will consider the nature of the sin here mentioned, which is *scoffing* at Religion, *There shall come scoffers* : These it seems were a sort of people that derided our Saviour's prediction of his coming to judge the world. So the *Apostle* tells us in the next words, that they said *where is the promise of his coming ?*

In those times there was a common persuasion among Christians *that the day of the Lord was at hand*, as the *Apostle* elsewhere tells us. Now this 'tis probable, these *scoffers* twitted the Christians withal ; and because Christ did not come when some looked for him they concluded he would not come at all. Upon this they derided the Christians as enduring persecution in a vain expectation of that which was never likely to happen. They saw all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world, notwithstanding the

the apprehensions of Christians concerning the approaching end of it; *For since the Fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the world. Since the Fathers fell asleep, ἀφ' ἧς*, which may either be render'd from the time, or else (which seems more agreeable to the atheistical discourse of these men) *saving or except that the fathers are fallen asleep, all things continue as they were*; Saving that men dye and one generation succeeds another, they saw no change or alteration. They looked upon all things as going on in a constant course; One generation of men passed away and another came in the room of it, but the world remain'd still as it was. And thus for ought they knew things might hold on for ever. So that the principles of these men seem to be much the same with those of the *Epicureans*, who denied the providence of God and the immortality of mens souls; and consequently a future judgment which should sentence men to rewards and punishments in another world. These great and fundamental principles of all Religion they derided as the fancies and dreams of a company of melancholy men, who were weary of the world and pleased themselves with vain conceits of happiness and ease in another life. But as for them, they believed none of those things; and therefore gave all manner of license and indulgence to their lusts.

But this belongs to the second thing I propounded to speak to, namely, II. The character which is here given of these *scoffers*; They are said *to walk after their own lusts*. And no wonder if when they denied a future judgment they gave up themselves to all manner of sensuality.

St. Jude in his *Epistle* gives much the same character of them that St. Peter here does, ver. 18, 19. *There shall come in the last days mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts, sensual, not having the Spirit*. So that we see what kind of persons they are who prophanely scoff at Religion, men of sensual spirits and of licentious lives. For this character which the *Apostle* here gives of the *scoffers* of that age was not an accidental thing which happened to those persons, but is the constant character of them who deride Religion, and flows from the very temper and disposition of those who are guilty of this impiety; it is both the usual preparation to it, and the natural consequent of it.

To deride God and Religion is the highest kind of impiety. And men do not usually arrive to this degree of wickedness at first, but they come to it by several steps. The *Psalmist* very elegantly expresseth to us the several gradations by which men at last come to this horrid degree of impiety; *Blessed is the man, that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful*. Men are usually first corrupted by bad counsel and company, which is called *walking in the counsel of the ungodly*; next they habituate themselves to their vicious practices, which is *standing in the way of sinners*; and then at last they take up and settle in a contempt of all Religion, which is called *sitting in the seat of the scornful*. Psalm. 1. 1.

For when men once indulge themselves in wicked courses, the vicious inclinations of their minds sway their understandings, and make them apt to disbelieve those truths which contradict their lusts. Every inordinate lust and passion is a false byass upon mens understandings which naturally draws toward Atheism. And when mens judgments are once byassed they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their interest. For when men live as if there were no God it becomes expedient for them that there should be none: And then they endeavour to persuade themselves so, and will be glad to find arguments to fortify themselves

Joh. 3.
19, 20.

selves in this persuasion. Men of dissolute lives cry down Religion, because they would not be under the restraints of it ; they are loth to be tied up by the strict laws and rules of it : 'Tis their interest more than any reason they have against it which makes them despise it, they hate it because they are reprov'd by it. So our Saviour tells us, that *men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil ; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*

I remember it is the saying of *one*, who hath done more by his *Writings* to debauch the Age with Atheistical principles than any man that lives in it ; *That when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason.* I am sure this is the true account of such mens enmity to Religion, Religion is against them, and therefore they set themselves against Religion. The principles of Religion and the doctrines of the *holy Scriptures* are terrible enemies to wicked men, they are continually flying in their faces and galling their consciences : And this is that which makes them kick against Religion and spurn at the doctrines of that *holy Book*. And this may probably be one reason why many men, who are observed to be sufficiently dull in other matters, yet can talk prophanely and speak against Religion with some kind of salt and smartness, because Religion is the thing that frets them ; and as in other things so in this, *vexatio dat intellectum*, the inward trouble and vexation of their minds gives them some kind of wit and sharpness in rallying upon Religion. Their consciences are galled by it, and this makes them winch and fling as if they had some metal. For, let men pretend what they will, there is no ease and comfort of mind to be had from atheistical principles. 'Tis found by experience, that none are more apprehensive of danger or more fearful of death than this sort of men : Even when they are in prosperity they ever and anon feel many inward stings and lashes, but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them they are the most poor-spirited creatures in the whole world.

The sum is ; the true reason why any man is an Atheist is because he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his lusts, and therefore he casts it off and puts all the scorn upon it he can. Besides, that men think it some kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profess : Their practice is agreeable to what they pretend to believe, and so they think to vindicate themselves and their own practices by laughing at those for fools who believe any thing to the contrary.

III. The *third* thing I propounded was, to represent to you the heinousness and the aggravations of this vice. And to make this out we will make these three suppositions, which are as many as the thing will bear.

1. Suppose there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were false.

2. Suppose the matter were doubtful, and the arguments equal on both sides.

3. Suppose it certain that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true. Put the case how we will, I shall shew that the humour is intolerable.

1. Suppose there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were false. Not that there is any reason for such a supposition, but only to shew the unreasonableness of this humour ; Put the case that these men were in the right, in denying the principles of Religion, and that all that they pretend were true ; yet so long as the generality of mankind believes the contrary, it is certainly a great rudeness, or incivility at least, to deride and scoff at these things. Indeed upon this supposition there could be no such thing as
sin,

sin, but yet it would be a great offence against the laws of civil conversation. Suppose then the Atheist were wiser than all the world, and that he did upon good grounds know that all mankind, besides himself and two or three more, were mistaken about the matters of Religion; yet if he were either so wise, or so civil as he should be, he would keep all this to himself, and not affront other men about these things.

I remember that that *Law* which God gave to the people of *Israel*, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the Rulers of thy people*; is rendred by *Josephus* in a very different sense: *What other nations account Gods, let no man blaspheme.* And this is not so different from the *Hebrew* as at first sight one would imagine, for the same *Hebrew* word signifies both *Gods* and *Rulers*. But whether this be the meaning of that *Law* or not there is a great deal of reason in the thing. For though every man have a right in dispute against a false Religion, and to urge it with all its absurd and ridiculous consequences, as the Ancient *Fathers* did in their disputes with the *Heathen*; yet it is a barbarous incivility for any man scurrilously to make sport with that which others account Religion, not with any design to convince their reason but only to provoke their rage.

But now the Atheist can pretend no obligation of conscience why he should so much as dispute against the principles of Religion, much less deride them. He that pretends to any Religion may pretend conscience for opposing a contrary Religion: But he that denies all Religion, can pretend no conscience for any thing. A man may be obliged indeed in reason and common humanity to free his neighbour from a hurtful error; but supposing there were no God this notion of a Deity and the Principles of Religion have taken such a deep root in the mind of man that either they are not to be extinguished, or if they be it would be no kindness to any man to endeavour it for him, because it is not to be done but with so much trouble and violence that the remedy would be worse than the disease.

For if this notion of a Deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to attempt to expel it; for whatever violence may be offer'd to nature by endeavouring to reason men into a contrary persuasion, nature will still recoil and at last return to it self, and then the fear will be augmented from the apprehension of the dangerous consequences of such an impiety. So that nothing can create more trouble to a man than to endeavour to dispossess him of this conceit, because nature is but irritated by the contest, and the man's fears will be doubled upon him.

But if we suppose this apprehension of a Deity to have no foundation in nature, but to have had its rise from tradition which hath been confirmed in the world by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will almost be as great as if it were natural, that which men take in by education being next to that which is natural. And if it could be extinguish'd, yet the advantage of it will not recompence the trouble of the cure. For except the avoiding of persecution for Religion, there is no advantage that the principles of Atheism if they could be quietly settled in a man's mind can give him. The advantage indeed that men make of them is to give themselves the liberty to do what they please, to be more sensual and more unjust than other men; that is, they have the privilege to surfeit themselves and to be sick oftner than other men, and to make mankind their enemy by their unjust and dishonest actions, and consequently to live more uneasily in the world than other men.

So that the principles of Religion, the *belief of a God*, and *another life*, by obliging men to be virtuous do really promote their temporal happiness.

And

And all the privilege that Atheism pretends to is to let men loose to vice, which is naturally attended with temporal inconveniences. And if this be true, then the Atheist cannot pretend this reason of charity to mankind (which is the only one I can think of) to dispute against Religion, much less to rally upon it. For it is plain, that it would be no kindness to any man to be undeceived in these principles of Religion, supposing they were false. Because the principles of Religion are so far from hindring, that they promote a man's happiness even in this world, and as to the other world there can be no inconvenience in the mistake, for when a man is not, it will be no trouble to him that he was once deceived about these matters.

And where no obligation of Conscience nor of reason can be pretended, there certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. Now men do profess to believe that there is a God, and that the common principles of Religion are true, and to have a great veneration for these things. Can there then be a greater insolence, than for a man when he comes into company to rally and fall foul upon those things for which he knows the company have a reverence? Can one man offer a greater affront to another, than to expose to scorn him whom he owns and declares to be his best friend, the patron of his life, and the greatest benefactor he hath in the world? And doth not every man that owns a God say this of him?

But when the generality of Mankind are of the same opinion the rudeness is still the greater. So that whoever doth openly contemn God and Religion does *delinquere in majestatem populi & humani generis*, he does offend against the majesty of the People and that reverence which is due to the common apprehensions of mankind, whether they be true or not; which is the greatest incivility that can be imagin'd.

This is the first consideration, and it is the least that I have to urge in this matter. But yet I have insisted the longer upon it, because it is such a one as ought especially to prevail upon those who I am afraid are too often guilty of this vice, I mean those who are of better breeding, because they pretend to understand the laws of behaviour and the decencies of conversation better than other men.

2. Supposing it were doubtful whether there be a God or not, and whether the Principles of Religion were true or not, and that the Arguments were equal on both sides; yet it would be a great folly to deride these things. And here I suppose as much as the Atheist can with any colour of reason pretend to. For no man ever yet pretended to demonstrate that there is no God, nor no life after this. For these being pure negatives are capable of no proof, unless a man could shew them to be plainly impossible. The utmost that is pretended is that the arguments that are brought for these things are not sufficient to convince. But if they were only probable, so long as no arguments are produced to the contrary, that cannot in reason be denied to be a great advantage.

But I will for the present suppose the probabilities equal on both sides. And upon this supposition I doubt not to make it appear to be a monstrous folly to deride these things. Because tho' the arguments on both sides were equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal.

If it prove true that there is no God the religious man may be as happy in this world as the Atheist, nay the principles of Religion and Virtue do in their own nature tend to make him happier. Because they give satisfaction to his mind, and his conscience by this means is freed from many fearful girds and twinges which the Atheist feels. Besides, that the practice of Religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more
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for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly respects to lead a virtuous than a vicious course of life. And for the other world, if there be no God the case of the religious man and the Atheist will be alike, because they will both be extinguish'd by death and insensible of any farther happiness or misery.

But then if the contrary opinion should prove true, that there is a God; and that the souls of men are transmitted out of this world into the other, there to receive the just reward of their actions: Then it is plain to every man at first sight, that the case of the religious man and the Atheist must be vastly different: Then, where shall the wicked, and the ungodly appear? And what think we shall be the portion of those who have affronted God, and derided his word, and made a mock of every thing that is sacred and religious? What can they expect but to be rejected by him whom they have renounced, and to feel the terrible effects of that Power and Justice which they have despised? So that tho' the arguments on both sides were equal, yet the danger is not so. On the one side there is none at all, but 'tis infinite on the other. And consequently, it must be a monstrous folly for any man to make a mock of those things which he knows not whether they be or not; and if they be, of all things in the world they are no jesting matters.

3. Suppose there be a God, and that the principles of Religion are true, then is it not only a heinous impiety but a perfect madness to scoff at these things. And that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true, I have already in my former *discourse* endeavour'd to prove; both from the things which are made, and from the general consent of mankind in these principles; of which universal consent no sufficient Reason can be given unless they were true. And supposing they are so, it is not only the utmost pitch of impiety, but the highest flight of folly that can be imagined to deride these things. To be disobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt, but to deny his *Being*, and to make sport with his *word*, and to endeavour to render it ridiculous by turning the wise and weighty sayings of that *Holy Book* into raillery, is a most direct affront to the God that is above. Thus the *Psalmist* describes these atheistical persons as levelling their blasphemies immediately against the Majesty of Heaven. *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth; they do mischief among men, but the affront is immediately to God.*

Besides, that this prophane spirit is an argument of a most incorrigible temper. The *Wise man* every where speaks of the *scorner* as one of the worst sort of sinners and hardest to be reclaimed, because he *despiset* *instruction* and mocks at all the means whereby he should be reformed.

And then, is it not a most black and horrid ingratitude thus to use the Author of our Beings and the Patron of our Lives; to make a scorn of him that made us, and to live in an open defiance of him *in whom we live, move, and have our beings*? But this is not all. As it is a most heinous so it is a most dangerous impiety, to despise him that can destroy us, and to oppose him who is infinitely more powerful than we are. *Will ye* (says the Apostle) *provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?* What *Gama-liel* said to the *Jews*, in another case, may with a little change be applied to this sort of men; If there be a God, and the principles of Religion be true, *ye cannot overthrow them, therefore refrain from speaking against these things, lest ye be found fighters against God.*

I will but add one thing more to shew the folly of this prophane temper. And that is this, that as it is the greatest of all other sins so there is in truth the least temptation to it. When the Devil tempts men with riches or
honour

honour to ruin themselves he offers them some kind of consideration : But the prophane person serves the Devil for nought, and sins only for sin's sake, suffers himself to be tempted to the greatest sins and into the greatest dangers for no other reward but the slender reputation of seeming to say that wittily which no wise man would say. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conscience to please his humour, and only for his jest to lose two of the best Friends he hath in the world, God and his own soul ?

I have done with the *three* things I propounded to speak to upon this Argument. And now I beg your patience to apply what I have said to these three purposes.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of prophane-ness which by some is miscalled wit.

2. To caution men not to think the worse of Religion, because some are so bold as to despise and deride it.

3. To persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purposes, in the service and to the glory of that God who hath bestowed these gifts on men.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly. I know not how it comes to pass that some men have the fortune to be esteemed Wits only for jesting out of the common road, and for making bold to scoff at those things which the greatest part of mankind reverence. As if a man should be accounted a Wit for reviling those in Authority which is no more an argument of any man's wit than it is of his discretion. A wise man would not speak contemptuously of a great Prince though he were out of his Dominions, because he remembers that Kings have long hands, and that their power and influence does many times reach a great way farther than their direct Authority. But God is a great King, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth ; we can go no whither from his Spirit, nor can we flee from his presence ; wherever we are his eyes see us and his right hand can reach us. If men did truly consult the interest either of their safety or reputation, they would never exercise their wit in dangerous matters. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wise man should always have the keeping of it. It is a sharp weapon, as apt for mischief as for good purposes if it be not well manag'd. The proper use of it is to season conversation, to represent what is praise-worthy to the greatest advantage, and to expose the vices and follies of men, such things as are in themselves truly ridiculous : But if it be applied to the abuse of the gravest and most serious matters it then loses its commendation. If any man think he abounds in this quality and hath wit to spare there is scope enough for it within the bounds of Religion and decency, and when it transgresseth these it degenerates into insolence and impiety. All wit which borders upon prophaneness and makes bold with those things to which the greatest reverence is due deserves to be branded for folly.

And if we would preserve our selves from the infection of this vice we must take heed how we scoff at Religion, under any form, lest insensibly we derive some contempt upon Religion it self. And we must likewise take heed how we accustom our selves to a slight and irreverent use of the Name of God, and of the phrases and expressions of the Holy Bible, which ought not to be applied upon every light occasion. Men will easily slide into the highest degree of prophaneness who are not careful to preserve a due reverence of the great and glorious Name of God, and an awful regard to the Holy Scriptures. None so nearly disposed to scoffing at Religion as those who have accustomed themselves to swear upon trifling occasions. For it is
just

just with God to permit those who allow themselves in one degree of prophaneity to proceed to another, till at last they come to that height of impiety as to contemn all Religion.

2. Let no man think the worse of Religion, because some are so bold as to despise and deride it. For 'tis no disparagement to any person or thing to be laugh't at, but to deserve to be so. The most grave and serious matters in the whole world are liable to be abus'd. It is a known saying of *Epicletus*, *that every thing hath two handles*; By which he means, that there is nothing so bad but a man may lay hold of something or other about it that will afford matter of excuse and extenuation, nor nothing so excellent but a man may fasten upon something or other belonging to it whereby to traduce it. A sharp wit may find something in the wisest man whereby to expose him to the contempt of injudicious people. The gravest Book that ever was written may be made ridiculous by applying the sayings of it to a foolish purpose. For a jest may be obtruded upon any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the less reverence for the principles of Religion, or for the holy Scriptures, because idle and prophane Wits can break jests upon them. Nothing is so easy as to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best Book in the world and to abuse them by forcing an odd and ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think a good Book foolish for this reason, but the man that abuses it; nor will he esteem that to which every thing is liable to be a just exception against any thing. At this rate we must despise all things, but surely the better and the shorter way is to contemn those who would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

3. And lastly, to persuade men to employ that reason and wit which God hath given them to better and nobler purposes in the service and to the glory of that God who hath bestowed these gifts on men, as *Aboliah* and *Bezaleel* did their mechanical skill in the adorning and beautifying of God's Tabernacle. For this is the perfection of every thing, to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all those gifts and endowments which God hath given us is to glorify the giver.

Here is subject enough to exercise the wit of men and angels: To praise that infinite goodness, and almighty power, and exquisite wisdom which made us and all things; and to admire what we can never sufficiently praise; To vindicate the wise and just providence of God, in the government of the world; and to endeavour, as well as we can upon an imperfect view of things, to make out the beauty and harmony of all the seeming discords and irregularities of the Divine administrations; To explain the oracles of the holy Scriptures, and to adore that great mystery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler Creatures than we are, desire to pry into) God's sending his only Son into the world to save sinners, and to give his life a ransom for them: These would be noble exercises indeed for the tongues and pens of the greatest Wits. And subjects of this nature are the best trials of our ability in this kind. Satyr and invective are the easiest kind of wit. Almost any degree of it will serve to abuse and find fault. For wit is a keen instrument, and every one can cut and gash with it, but to carve a beautiful image and to polish it requires great art and dexterity. To praise any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuse. A little wit, and a great deal of ill nature will furnish a man for Satyr, but the greatest instance of wit is to commend well. And perhaps the best things are the hardest to be duly commended. For tho there be a great deal of matter to work upon yet there is great judgment required to make choice. And where the subject is great and excellent it is hard not to sink below the dignity of it.

This I say on purpose to recommend to men a nobler exercise for their wits, and if it be possible, to put them out of conceit with that scoffing humour which is so easy, and so ill-natur'd, and is not only an enemy to Religion but to every thing else that is wise and worthy. And I am very much mistaken, if the state as well as the Church, the civil government as well as Religion, do not in a short space find the intolerable inconvenience of this humour.

But I confine my self to the consideration of Religion. And it is sad indeed, that in a Nation professing Christianity so horrid an impiety should dare to appear. But the Scripture hath foretold us that this sort of men should arise in the Gospel-age, and they did appear even in the Apostles days. That which is more sad and strange is, that we should persist in this prophaneness notwithstanding the terrible judgments of God which have been abroad in this Nation. God hath of late years manifested himself in a very dreadful manner, as if it were on purpose to give a check to this insolent impiety. And now that those judgments have done no good upon us we may justly fear that he will appear once for all. And 'tis time for him to shew himself when his very Being is call'd in question, and to come and judge the world when men begin to doubt whether he made it.

The Scripture mentions two things as the fore-runners and reasons of his coming to judgment, *infidelity*, and *prophane scoffing at Religion*. *When the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* And St. Jude out of an ancient prophecy of *Enoch* expressly mentions this as one reason of the coming of the Lord, *to convince ungodly sinners of all their hard speeches which they had spoken against him*.

Luk. 18.8.
Jude 15.
ver.

And if these things be a sign and reason of his coming, I wish that we in this Age had not too much cause to apprehend *the Judge to be at the door*. This impiety did forerun the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the utter ruin of the *Jewish Nation*. And if it hold on amongst us, may not we have reason to fear that either *the end of all things is at hand*, or that some very dismal calamity greater than any our eyes have yet seen does hang over us? But I would fain hope that God hath mercy still for us, and that men will pity themselves, and *repent, and give glory to God, and know in this their day the things that belong to their peace*. Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of *Christ*, To whom with the Father, &c.

S E R M O N III.

The Advantages of Religion to Societies.

P R O V. XIV. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a Nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.

ONE of the first principles that is planted in the nature of man, and which lies at the very root and foundation of his being is the desire of his own preservation and happiness. Hence it is that every man is led by interest, and does love or hate, chuse or refuse things, according as he apprehends them to conduce to this end, or to contradict it. And because the happiness of this life is most present and sensible, therefore human nature (which in this degenerate state is extremely sunk down into sense) is most powerfully affected with sensible and temporal things. And consequently, there cannot be a greater prejudice raised against any thing than to have it represented as inconvenient and hurtful to our temporal interests.

Upon this account it is that Religion hath extremely suffer'd in the opinion of many as if it were opposite to our present welfare, and did rob men of the greatest advantages and conveniences of life. So that he that would do right to Religion, and make a ready way for the entertainment of it among men, cannot take a more effectual course than by reconciling it with the happiness of mankind and by giving satisfaction to our reason, that it is so far from being an enemy that it is the greatest friend to our temporal interests; and that it doth not only tend to make every man happy consider'd singly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of human society.

How much Religion tends even to the temporal advantage of private persons I shall not now consider, because my Text leads me to discourse of the other, namely, to shew how advantageous Religion and Virtue are to the publick prosperity of a Nation, which I take to be the meaning of this *Aphorism* of Solomon, *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, &c.*

And here I shall not restrain *righteousness* to the particular virtue of justice (tho in this sense also this saying is most true) but enlarge it according to the *genius* and strain of the Book of the *Proverbs*, in which the words *wisdom* and *righteousness* are commonly used very comprehensively so as to signify all Religion and Virtue. And that this word is so to be taken in the Text may appear farther from the opposition of it to sin or vice in general; *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is the reproach of any People.*

You see then what will be the subject of my present discourse; namely, that *Religion and Virtue are the great causes of publick happiness and prosperity.*

And though the truth of this hath been universally acknowledged and long enough experienced in the world, yet because the fashion of the age is to call every thing into question, it will be requisite to satisfy mens reason about it. To which end I shall do these two things.

1. Endeavour to give an account of this Truth.
2. To vindicate it from the pretences and insinuations of atheistical persons.

I shall give you this twofold account of it.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence.

2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence. Indeed, as to particular persons, the providences of God are many times promiscuously administered in this world; so that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person by any thing that befalls him in this life. But God does not deal thus with Nations. Because publick bodies and communities of men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world. For in the next, all those publick societies and combinations wherein men are now link'd together under several Governments, shall be dissolved. God will not then reward or punish Nations, as Nations; But every man shall then give an account of himself to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burthen. For altho' God account it no disparagement to his justice to let particular good men suffer in this world and pass through many tribulations into the kingdom of God, because there is another day a coming which will be a more proper season of reward; yet in the usual course of his providence he recompenceth religious and virtuous Nations with temporal blessings and prosperity. For which reason St. *Austin* tells us that the mighty success and long prosperity of the *Romans* was a reward given them by God for their eminent justice and temperance, and other virtues. And on the other hand, God many times suffers the most grievous sins of particular persons to go unpunished in this world, because he knows that his justice will have another and better opportunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying Sins of a Nation cannot hope to escape publick judgments, unless they be prevented by a general repentance. God may defer his judgments for a time and give a People a longer space of repentance, he may stay till the iniquities of a Nation be full, but sooner or later they have reason to expect his vengeance. And usually the longer punishment is delay'd it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reasonable, because this world is the only season for National punishments. And indeed they are in a great degree necessary for the present vindication of the honour and majesty of the Divine Laws, and to give some check to the overflowing of wickedness. Publick judgments are the banks and shores upon which God breaks the insolency of sinners and stays their proud waves. And though among men the multitude of offenders be many times a cause of impunity, because of the weakness of human Governments which are glad to spare where they are not strong enough to punish, yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwise. No combination of sinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his justice is concern'd to vindicate the affront. However God may pass by single sinners in this world, yet when a Nation combines against him, *when hand joins in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

This the *Scripture* declares to be the settled course of God's providence; That a righteous Nation shall be happy; *The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effects of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that he useth to shower down his judgments upon a wicked people, *he turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*

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And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the History of the *Old Testament*, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the People of *Israel* always suited to their manners. They were constantly prosperous or afflicted according as piety and virtue flourished or declined amongst them. And God did not only exercise this providence towards his own People, but he dealt thus also with other nations. The *Roman Empire* whilst the virtue of that people remained firm was *strong as iron*, as 'tis represented in the Prophecy of *Daniel*: But upon the dissolution of their manners the *iron* began *to be mixt with miry clay*, and the feet upon which that Empire stood, *to be broken*. And tho God in the administration of his justice be not tied to precedents, and we cannot argue from Scripture-examples that the providences of God towards other Nations shall in all circumstances be conformable to his dealings with the People of *Israel*; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them, that as God always blessed that People while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments when they rebelled against him, so he will also deal with other Nations. Because the reason of those dispensations as to the main and substance of them seems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, the justice of the Divine providence.

2dly. The truth of this farther appears from the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion in general, and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the publick Interest.

Religion, where-ever it is truly planted is certainly the greatest obligation upon conscience to all civil offices and moral duties. Chastity and temperance and industry do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings do create mutual love and good-will and confidence among men, which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedness doth in its own nature produce many publick mischiefs. For as sins are link'd together and draw on one another, so almost every vice hath some temporal inconvenience annexed to it and naturally following it. Intemperance and lust breed infirmities and diseases, which being propagated spoil the strain of a Nation. Idleness and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injustice, and that causeth enmity and animosities, and these bring on *strife and confusion and every evil work*. This Philosophical account of publick troubles and confusions St. James gives us, *Whence come wars and fightings among you? are they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?* Jam. 4. 1.

But I shall shew more particularly, that Religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order and more easy government of human society, because they have a good influence both upon Magistrates and Subjects.

1. Upon Magistrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God, because tho they be Gods on earth yet they are subjects of Heaven, and accountable to Him who is higher than the highest in this world. Religion in a Magistrate strengthens his authority, because it procures veneration and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world so much reputation is really so much power. We see that piety and virtue, where they are found among men of lower degree, will command some reverence and respect: But in persons of eminent place and dignity they are seated to a great advantage, so as to cast a lustre upon their very Place and by a strong reflexion to double the beams of Majesty. Whereas impiety and vice do strangely lessen greatness, and do secretly and unavoidably derive some weakness upon authority it self. Of this the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable instance in *David*. For among other things which made the

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Sons of Zerviah too hard for him this probably was none of the least, that they were particularly conscious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the People; to make them obedient to their Government, and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to Government, and conformable to Laws; and that *not only for wrath* and out of fear of the Magistrates power, which is but a weak and loose principle of obedience, and will cease, when ever men can rebel with safety, and to advantage; but out of *Conscience*, which is a firm, and constant and lasting principle, and will hold a man fast when all other obligations will break. He that hath entertain'd the true principles of Christianity is not to be tempted from his obedience and subjection by any worldly considerations, because he believes that *whosoever resisteth authority resisteth the ordinance of God*, and that *they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation*.

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all those qualities and dispositions in men which tend to peace and unity, and to fill men with a spirit of universal love and good will. It endeavours likewise to secure every man's interest by commanding the observation of that great rule of equity, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them*; by enjoining that truth and fidelity be inviolably observed in all our words, promises and contracts. And in order hereunto it requires the extirpation of all those passions and vices which render men unsociable and troublesome to one another, as pride, covetousness and injustice, hatred and revenge and cruelty; and those likewise which are not so commonly reputed vices, as self-conceit and peremptoriness in a man's own opinion, and all peevishness, and in-compliance of humour in things lawful and indifferent.

And that these are the proper effects of true piety the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the design of Religion to bring us to this temper, thus to heal the natures of men and to sweeten their spirits, to correct their passions and to mortify all those lusts which are the causes of enmity and division, then it is evident that in its own nature it tends to the peace and happiness of human society; and that if men would but live as Religion requires they should do, the world would be a quiet habitation, a most lovely and desirable place in comparison of what now it is. And indeed the true reason why the societies of men are so full of tumult and disorder, so troublesome and tempestuous, is because there is so little of true Religion among men; so that were it not for some small remainders of piety and virtue which are yet left scatter'd among mankind, human society would in a short space disband and run into confusion, the earth would grow wild and become a great forest, and mankind would become beasts of prey one towards another. And if this discourse hold true surely then one would think that virtue should find it self a seat where-ever human societies are, and that Religion should be owned and encouraged in the world until men cease to be governed by reason.

II. I come to vindicate this truth from the insinuations and pretences of atheistical persons. I shall mention two.

1. That government may subsist well enough without the belief of a God and a state of rewards and punishments after this life.

2. That as for virtue and vice they are arbitrary things.

1. That government may subsist well enough without the belief of a God
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or a state of rewards and punishments after this life. And this the Atheist does and must assert, otherwise he is by his own confession a declared enemy to Government and unfit to live in human society.

For answer to this, I will not deny but that tho the generality of men did not believe any superior Being nor any rewards and punishments after this life, yet notwithstanding this there might be some kind of Government kept up in the world. For supposing men to have reason, the necessities of human nature and the mischiefs of confusion would probably compel them into some kind of order. But then I say withal, that if these principles were banished out of the world Government would be far more difficult than now it is, because it would want its firmest Basis and foundation; there would be infinitely more disorders in the world if men were restrained from injustice and violence only by human laws, and not by principles of conscience and the dread of another world. Therefore Magistrates have always thought themselves concerned to cherish Religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God and another life. Nay that common suggestion of atheistical persons, that Religion was at first a politick device and is still kept up in the world as a State engine to awe men into obedience, is a clear acknowledgment of the usefulness of it to the ends of Government, and does as fully contradict that pretence of theirs which I am now confuting as any thing that can be said.

2. That virtue and vice are arbitrary things founded only in the imaginations of men and in the constitutions and customs of the world, but not in the nature of the things themselves; and that *that* is virtue or vice, good or evil, which the Supreme Authority of a Nation declares to be so. And this is frequently and confidently asserted by the ingenious Author of a very bad Book, I mean the *Leviathan*.

Now the proper way of answering any thing that is confidently asserted is to shew the contrary, namely, That there are some things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiousness, unrighteousness and ingratitude, which are things not only condemned by the positive laws and constitutions of particular Nations and Governments but by the general verdict of human nature: And that the virtues contrary to these have a natural goodness and comeliness in them, and are suitable to the common principles and sentiments of humanity.

And this will most evidently appear by putting this supposition. Suppose the reverse of all that which we now call virtue were solemnly enacted, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and falseness to a man's word, and all manner of vice and wickedness were established by a Law. I ask now, if the case between virtue and vice were thus alter'd, would that which we now call vice in process of time gain the reputation of virtue, and that which we now call virtue grow odious and contemptible to human nature? If it would not, then is there something in the nature of good and evil, of virtue, and vice, which does not depend upon the pleasure of authority, nor is subject to any arbitrary Constitution. But that it would not be thus I am very certain, because no Government could subsist upon these terms. For the very enjoining of fraud and rapine and perjury and breach of trust doth apparently destroy the greatest end of Government, which is to preserve men in their rights against the encroachments of fraud and violence. And this end being destroyed human societies would presently fly in pieces and men would necessarily fall into a state of war. Which plainly shews that virtue and vice are not arbitrary things, but that there is a natural and immutable and eternal reason for that which

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we call goodness and virtue, and against that which we call vice and wickedness.

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence and vindicate this truth. I shall only draw an Inference or two from this discourse, and so conclude.

1. If this discourse be true, then those who are in place of power and authority are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of Religion.
2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. Magistrates are concerned to maintain the honour of Religion, which doth not only tend to every man's future happiness, but is the best instrument of Civil Government and of the temporal prosperity of a Nation. For the whole design of it is to procure the private and publick happiness of mankind, and to restrain men from all those things which would make them miserable and guilty to themselves, unpeaceable and troublesome to the world. Religion hath so great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not only out of a just dread of the divine vengeance in another world, but out of regard to the temporal peace and prosperity of men. It will requite all the kindness and honour we can do it by the advantages it will bring to Civil Government, and by the blessings it will draw down upon it. God hath promised that *those that honour him, he will honour*, and in the common course of his providence he usually makes this good, so that the civil Authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and Religion, if for no other reason yet out of *reason of State*.

It were to be wish'd that all men were so piously disposed, that Religion by its own authority and the reasonable force of it might be sufficient to establish its Empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a strong opposition against it. And therefore at the first planting of the Christian Religion in the world God was pleased to accompany it with a miraculous power: But after it was planted this extraordinary power ceased, and God hath now left it to be maintained and supported by more ordinary and human ways, by the countenance of Authority, and assistance of Laws; which were never more necessary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiously sunk into Atheism and prophaneness, and is running headlong into an humour of scoffing at God and Religion and every thing that is sacred. For some ages before the Reformation Atheism was confined to *Italy*, and had its chief residence at *Rome*. All the mention that is of it in the History of those times the Papists themselves give us in the lives of their own Popes and Cardinals, excepting two or three small Philosophers that were retainers to that Court. So that this Atheistical humour among Christians was the spawn of the gross superstitions and corrupt manners of the *Romish* Church and Court. And indeed nothing is more natural than for extremes in Religion to beget one another, like the vibrations of a *pendulum* which the more violently you swing it one way the farther it will return the other. But in the last age, Atheism travell'd over the *Alps* and infected *France*, and now of late it hath crossed the Seas and invaded our Nation and hath prevailed to amazement: For I do not think that there are any people in the World that are generally more indisposed to it and can worse brook it, seriousness and zeal in Religion being almost the natural temper of the *English*. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and sober Nation prophaneness should ever come to gain so much ground, and the best and the wisest Religion in the world to be made the

the scorn of fools. For besides the prophane and atheistical discourses about God and Religion, and the bold and senseless abuses of this *sacred Book* the great instruments of our salvation, which are so frequent in the publick places of resort; I say, besides these (I speak it knowingly) a man can hardly pass the streets without having his ears grated and pierced with such horrid and blasphemous oaths and curses as are enough, if we were guilty of no other sin, to sink a Nation. And this not only from the *Tribe* that wear Liveries, but from those that go before them and should give better example. Is it not then high time that the Laws should provide by the most prudent and effectual means to curb these bold and insolent defiers of Heaven, who take a pride in being monsters, and boast themselves in the follies and deformities of human nature? The Heathens would never suffer their Gods to be reviled, which yet were no Gods. And shall it among the professors of the true Religion be allowed to any man to make a mock of Him that made Heaven and Earth, and to breathe out blasphemies against Him who gives us life and breath and all things? I doubt not but hypocrisy is a great wickedness and very odious to God, but by no means of so pernicious example as open prophaneness. Hypocrisy is a more modest way of sinning, it shews some reverence to Religion, and does so far own the worth and excellency of it as to acknowledge that it deserves to be counterfeited: Whereas prophaneness declares openly against it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of Religion and Virtue; Because the publick happiness and prosperity depends upon it. It is most apparent that of late years Religion is very sensibly declin'd among us. The manners of men have almost been universally corrupted by a Civil War. We should therefore all jointly endeavour to retrieve the ancient virtue of the Nation, and to bring into fashion again that solid and substantial, that plain and unaffected piety, (free from the extremes both of superstition and enthusiasm) which flourished in the age of our immediate Forefathers. Which did not consist in idle talk but in real effects, in a sincere love of God and of our neighbour, in a pious devotion and reverence towards the Divine Majesty, and in the virtuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and in *living soberly and righteously and godly in this present world*. This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to stop the course of his judgments, and to bring down the blessings of Heaven upon us. God hath now been pleased to settle us again in peace both at home and abroad, and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own counsel. Life and Death, blessing and cursing, prosperity and destruction are before us. We may chuse our own fortune, and if we be not wanting to our selves we may under the influences of God's grace and assistance, which is never wanting to our sincere endeavours, become a happy and a prosperous People.

The good God make us all wise to know and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and prosperity of the Nation, and to the eternal happiness and salvation of every one of our souls; which we humbly beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

S E R M O N IV.

The Advantages of Religion to particular Persons.

P S A L M XIX. 11.

And in keeping of them there is great reward.

IN this *Psalms* David celebrates the glory of God from the consideration of the greatness of his Works, and the perfection of his Laws. From the greatness of his Works, *verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, &c.* From the perfection of his Laws, *ver. 7. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, &c.* And among many other excellencies of the Divine Laws, he mentions in the last place the benefits and advantages which come from the observance of them, *verse 11. and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

I have already shown how much Religion tends to the publick welfare of mankind; to the support of Government, and to the peace and happiness of human Societies. My work at this time shall be to shew that Religion and obedience to the Laws of God do likewise conduce to the happiness of particular persons, both in respect of this world and the other. For tho' there be but little express mention made in the *Old Testament* of the immortality of the Soul and the rewards of another life, yet all Religion does suppose these Principles, and is built upon them.

I. And *First*, I shall endeavour to shew how Religion conduceth to the happiness of this life; and that both in respect of the inward and outward man.

First, As to the mind; to be pious and religious brings a double advantage to the mind of man. 1. It tends to the improvement of our understandings. 2. It brings peace and pleasure to our Minds.

1. It tends to the improvement of our understandings: I do not mean only that it instructs us in the knowledge of divine and spiritual things, and makes us to understand the great interest of our souls and the concerns of eternity better, but that in general it does raise and enlarge the minds of men and make them more capable of true knowledge. And in this sense I understand the following Texts; *The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments; Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies*, which plainly refers to political prudence; *I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy Testimonies are my meditation, I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts; Through thy precepts I get understanding; The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.*

Now Religion doth improve the understandings of men by subduing their lusts, and moderating their passions. The lusts and passions of men do fully and darken their minds, even by a natural influence. Intemperance and sensuality and fleshly lusts do debase mens minds, and clog their spirits, make

Psal. 119.
10.
Psal. 119.
98.
ver. 99.

ver. 104.
ver. 130.

make them gross and foul, listless and unactive; they sink us down into sense, and glew us to these low and inferior things like *birdlime*; they hamper and entangle our souls, and hinder their flight upwards; they indispose and unfit our minds for the most noble and intellectual considerations. So likewise the exorbitant passions of wrath and malice, envy and revenge, do darken and distort the understandings of men, do tincture the mind with false colours and fill it with prejudice and undue apprehensions of things.

There is no man that is intemperate, or lustful, or passionate, but besides the guilt he contracts which is continually fretting and disquieting his mind, besides the inconveniences he brings upon himself as to his health, he does likewise stain and obscure the brightness of his Soul and the clearness of his discerning faculty. Such persons have not that free use of their reason that they might have; their understandings are not bright enough, nor their spirits pure and fine enough for the exercise of the highest and noblest acts of reason. What clearness is to the eye, that purity is to our mind and understanding, and as the clearness of the bodily eye doth dispose it for a quicker sight of material objects, so doth the purity of our minds, that is, freedom from lust and passion, dispose us for the clearest and most perfect acts of reason and understanding.

Now Religion doth purify our minds and refine our spirits by quenching the fire of lust and suppressing the fumes and vapours of it, and by scattering the clouds and mists of passion. And the more any man's soul is cleansed from the filth and dregs of sensual lusts the more nimble and expedite it will be in its operations. The more any man conquers his passions, the more calm and sedate his spirit is, and the greater equality he maintains in his temper, his apprehensions of things will be the more clear and unprejudic'd, and his judgment more firm and steddy. And this is the meaning of that saying of *Solomon*, *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding, but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. Ira furor brevis est*---- Anger is a short fit of madness, and he that is passionate and furious deprives himself of his reason, spoils his understanding, and helps to make himself a fool: whereas he that conquers his passions and keeps them under, doth thereby preserve and improve his understanding. Freedom from irregular passions doth not only signify that a man is wise, but really contributes to the making of him such.

2. Religion tends to the ease and pleasure, the peace and tranquility of our minds; wherein happiness chiefly consists and which all the wisdom and Philosophy of the world did always aim at, as the utmost felicity of this life. And that this is the natural fruit of a Religious and virtuous course of life, the Scripture declares to us in these Texts; *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; Great peace have all they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them; Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; The fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever*; The plain sense of which Texts is, that pleasure and peace do naturally result from a holy and good life. When a man hath once engag'd himself in a Religious course, and is habituated to piety and holiness, all the exercises of Religion and devotion, all acts of goodness and virtue are delightful to him. To honour and worship God, to pray to him and to praise him, to study his will, to meditate upon him and to love him, all these bring great pleasure and peace along with them. What greater contentment and satisfaction can there be to the mind of man, when it is once purify'd and refin'd from the dregs of sensual pleasures and delights, and rais'd to its true height and pitch, than to con-

Psal 97.

11.

Psal 119.

65.

Prov 3.

17.

Ila. 32. 17.

template and admire the infinite excellencies and perfections of God, to adore his greatness and to love his goodness? How can the thoughts of God be troublesome to any one who lives soberly and righteously and godly in the world? No man that loves goodness and righteousness hath any reason to be afraid of God, or to be disquieted with the thoughts of him. There is nothing in God that is terrible to a good man, but all the apprehensions which we naturally have of him speak comfort and promise happiness to such a one. The consideration of his attributes is so far from being a trouble to him that it is his recreation and delight. It is for wicked men to dread God and to endeavour to banish the thoughts of him out of their minds; but a holy and virtuous man may have quiet and undisturb'd thoughts even of the justice of God, because the terror of it doth not concern him.

Now Religion doth contribute to the peace and quiet of our minds these two ways. *First*, By allaying those passions which are apt to ruffle and discompose our spirits. Malice and hatred, wrath and revenge are very fretting and vexatious and apt to make our minds sore and uneasy, but he that can moderate these affections will find a strange ease and pleasure in his own spirit. *Secondly*, by freeing us from the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine wrath and displeasure; than which nothing is more stinging and tormenting and renders the life of man more miserable and unquiet. And what a spring of peace and joy must it needs be to apprehend upon good grounds that God is reconcil'd to us and become our friend; that all our sins are perfectly forgiven and shall never more be remembered against us! What unexpressible comfort does overflow the pious and devout soul from the remembrance of a holy and well-spent life and a conscience of its own innocency and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and Virtue can give this ease and satisfaction to the mind of man. For there is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary to the pleasure and quiet of our minds, and consequently to our happiness; and that is holiness and goodness, which as it is the perfection so is it likewise the happiness of the Divine nature: And on the contrary, the chief part of the misery of wicked men, and of those accursed spirits the Devils is this, that they are of a disposition contrary to God; they are envious and malicious and cruel, and of such a temper as is naturally a torment and disquiet to it self. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of mens minds; and till this be cur'd, which can only be done by Religion, it is as impossible for a man to be happy, that is, pleas'd and contented within himself, as it is for a sick man to be at ease. Because such a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at ease till that be remov'd. The man's spirit is out of order and off the hinges, and till that be put into its right frame he will be perpetually disquieted and can find no rest within himself. The *Prophet* very fitly describes to us the unquiet condition of wicked men, *The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace (saith my God) to the wicked.* So long as sin and corruption abound in our hearts they will be restlessly working, like wine which will be in a perpetual motion and agitation till it have purg'd it self of its dregs and foulness.

Isa. 57.
20, 21.

Secondly, Religion does likewise tend to the happiness of the outward man. Now the blessings of this kind are such as either respect our *health*, or *estate*, or *reputation*, or *relations*; and in respect of all these Religion is highly advantageous to us.

I. As to our health, a Religious and virtuous life doth eminently conduce to that, and to long life as a consequent of it. And in this sense I understand these

these following Texts ; *My Son forget not my Law, but let thy heart keep my Commandments ; for length of days, and long life, shall they add to thee ;* and v. 7, and 8. *Fear the Lord and depart from evil, it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones ;* and v. 16. among the temporal advantages of wisdom or Religion this is mention'd as the first and principal, *length of days is in her right hand ;* and v. 18. *she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her ;* and again, *Whoso findeth me, findeth life, but he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul ;* (that is, is injurious to his own life) *all they that hate me love death ;* all which is undoubtedly true in a spiritual sense, but is certainly meant by Solomon in the natural sense. And these promises, of the blessings of health and long life to good men are not only declaratory of the good pleasure and intention of God towards them, but likewise of the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion doth oblige men to the practice of those virtues which do in their own nature conduce to the preservation of our health, and the lengthening of our days ; such as temperance and chastity and moderation of our passions. And the contrary vices to these do apparently tend to the impairing of mens health and the shortning of their days. How many have wasted and consum'd their bodies by lust, and brought grievous pains and mortal diseases upon themselves ! See how the wise man describes the sad consequences of this sin, *He goes as an Ox to the slaughter, till a dart strike through his Liver ; as a Bird hasteneth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life ;* and v. 25, 26, 27. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths ; for she hath cast down many wounded ; yea many strong men have been slain by her ; her house is the way to Hell* (that is, to the grave) *going down to the chambers of death.* How many have been ruin'd by intemperance and excess, and most unnaturally have perverted those blessings which God hath given for the support of nature to the overthrow and destruction of it ? How often hath mens malice and envy and discontent against others terminated in a cruel revenge upon themselves ? How many by the wild fury and extravagancy of their own passions, have put their bodies into a combustion, and fir'd their spirits ; and by stirring up their rage and choler against others have arm'd that fierce humour against themselves ?

2. As to our estates, Religion is likewise a mighty advantage to men in that respect. Not only in regard of God's more especial providence and peculiar blessing which usually attends good men in their undertakings and crowns them with good success, but also from the nature of the thing. And this, I doubt not, is the meaning of those expressions of the *Wise man* concerning the temporal benefits and advantages of wisdom or Religion ; *In her left hand are riches and honour ; They that love me shall inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.* And this Religion principally does, by charging men with truth and fidelity and justice in their dealings, which are a sure way of thriving and will hold out when all fraudulent arts and devices will fail. And this also Solomon observes to us ; *He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that perverteth his way shall be known ;* his indirect dealing will be discover'd one time or other, and then loses his reputation, and his interest sinks. Falshood and deceit only serve a present turn, and the consequence of them is pernicious ; but truth and fidelity are a lasting advantage ; *The righteous hath an everlasting foundation ; The lip of truth is established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* And Religion does likewise engage men to diligence and industry in their Callings, and how much this conduces to the advancement of mens fortunes daily experience teaches, and the *Wise man* hath told us, *The diligent hand makes rich ;* and again,

Prov. 3.
1, 2.Prov. 8.
35, 36.Prov. 7.
22, 23.Prov. 3. 16.
Prov. 8. 21.

Prov. 10. 6.

Prov. 10. 5.
Prov. 12.
19.

Prov. 10. 4.

Prov. 22. again, *Seest thou a man diligent in business, he shall stand before Princes, he*
29. *shall not stand before mean persons.*

And where men by reason of the difficult circumstances of their condition cannot arrive to any eminency of estate, yet Religion makes a compensation for this by teaching men to be contented with that moderate and competent fortune which God hath given them. For the shortest way to be rich is not by enlarging our estates, but by contracting our desires. What *Seneca* says of Philosophy, is much more true of Religion, *præstat opes sapientia, quas cuicunque fecit supervacuas dedit*, it makes all those rich to whom it makes riches superfluous, and they are so to those who are taught by Religion to be contented with such a portion of them as God's Providence hath thought fit to allot to them.

3. As to our reputation. There is nothing gives a man a more firm and establish'd reputation among wise and serious persons (whose judgment is only valuable) than a prudent and substantial Piety. This doth many times command reverence and esteem from the worse sort of men, and such as are no great friends to Religion; and sometimes the force of truth will extort an acknowledgment of its excellency, even from its greatest enemies. I know very well that good men may, and often do, blemish the reputation of their piety by over-acting some things in Religion; by an indiscreet zeal about things wherein Religion is not concern'd, by an ungrateful austerity and frowardness which Religion doth not require; by little affectations, and an imprudent ostentation of devotion; but a substantial and solid, a discreet and unaffected piety, which makes no great noise and show, but expresses it self in a constant and serious devotion, and is accompanied with the fruits of goodness and kindness and righteousness towards men, will not only give a man a credit and value among the sober and the virtuous, but even among the vicious and more degenerate sort of men. Upon this account it is that the Apostle adviseth Christians, if they would recommend themselves to the esteem of God and men, earnestly to mind the weighty and substantial parts of Religion; *Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

It is true indeed, there are some persons of so profligate a temper, and of such an inveterate enmity to all goodness, as to scorn and reproach even Religion and Virtue it self. But the reproach of such persons does not really wound a man's reputation. For why should any man be troubled at the contumelies of those whose judgment deserves not to be valued, who despise goodness and good men out of malice and ignorance? If these reproaches which they cast upon them were the censures of wise and sober men, a man's reputation might be concern'd in them; but they are the rash words of inconsiderate and injudicious men, the extravagant speeches of those who are unexperienc'd in the things they speak against; and therefore no wise man will be troubled at them, or think either Religion or himself disparaged by them.

4. As to our Relations. Religion also conduceth to the happiness of these, as it derives a large and extensive blessing upon all that belongs to us; the goodness of God being so diffusive as to scatter his blessings round about the habitations of the just, and to shew mercy unto thousands of them that love him and keep his Commandments. So *David* tells us, *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches*

Psal. 112.
1, 2, 3.

riches are in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever. And so Solomon; *A good man leaveth an inheritance to his Childrens Children*; and again, *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his Children shall have a place of refuge*. But the wicked derives a curse upon all that is related to him, he is said *to trouble his own house*; and again, *The wicked are overthrown, and are not, but the house of the righteous shall stand*. Prov. 13. 21. Prov. 14. 26. Prov. 11. 29. Prov. 12. 7.

But setting aside the consideration of God's Providence, Religion doth likewise in its own nature tend to the welfare of those who are related to us; because it lays the strictest obligations upon men to take care of their Families and Relations, and to make the best provision both for their comfortable subsistence here in this world and their salvation in the next. And those who neglect these duties, the Scripture is so far from esteeming them Christians that it accounts them worse than Heathens and Infidels, *He that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, is worse than an Infidel, and hath denied the faith*. This I know is spoken in respect of temporal provision, but it holds *à fortiori* as to the care of their souls. 1 Tim. 5. 8.

Besides, it is many times seen that the posterity of holy and good men, especially of such as have evidenc'd their piety towards God by bounty and charity to men, have met with unusual kindness and respect from others, and have by a strange and secret disposition of Divine providence been unexpectedly car'd and provided for; and that, as they have all the reason in the world to believe, upon the account and for the sake of the piety and charity of their Parents. This David tells us from his own particular observation; *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*. And that by the *righteous* is here meant the good and merciful man appears from the description of him in the next words, *He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed*. And on the contrary, the posterity of the wicked do many times inherit the fruit of their fathers sins and vices; and that not only by a just judgment of God, but from the natural course and consequence of things. And in this sense that expression in Job is often verifi'd, that *God lays up the iniquity of wicked men for their Children*. And doth not experience testify that the intemperate and unjust do many times transmit their bodily infirmities and diseases to their Children, and entail a secret curse upon their estates, which does either insensibly waste and consume it, or eat out the heart and comfort of it? Thus you see how Religion in all respects conduces to the happiness of this life. Ps 37. 25. Ver. 26. Job 21. 19.

II. Religion and Virtue do likewise most certainly and directly tend to the eternal happiness and salvation of men in the other world. And this is incomparably the greatest advantage that redounds to men by being Religious, in comparison of which all temporal considerations are *less than nothing and vanity*. The worldly advantages that Religion brings to men in this present life are a sensible recommendation of Religion even to the lowest and meanest spirits: But to those who are rais'd above sense and aspire after immortality, who believe the perpetual duration of their souls and the resurrection of their bodies; to those who are thoroughly convinc'd of the inconsiderableness of this short dying life and of all the concerns of it, in comparison of that eternal state which remains for us in another life; to these, I say, the consideration of a future happiness and of those unspeakable and everlasting rewards which shall then be given to holiness and virtue, is certainly the most powerful motive, and the most likely to prevail upon them. For those who are persuaded that they shall continue for ever, cannot chuse but aspire after a happiness commensurate to their duration, nor can any thing

thing that is conscious to its self of its own immortality be satisfied and contented with any thing less than the hopes of an endless felicity. And this hope Religion alone gives men, and the Christian Religion only can settle men in a firm and unshaken assurance of it. But because all men who have entertain'd any Religion have consented to these principles, of the *immortality of the soul* and the *recompences of another world*, and have always promis'd to themselves some rewards of piety and virtue after this life; and because I did more particularly design from this *Text* to speak of the temporal benefits and advantages which redound to men from Religion, therefore I shall content my self to shew very briefly how a religious and virtuous life doth conduce to our future happiness. And that upon these two accounts; from the promise of God, and from the nature of the thing.

1. From the promise of God. *Godliness* (saith the Apostle) *hath the promise of the life that is to come*. God hath all along in the Scripture suspended the promise of eternal life upon this condition. He hath peremptorily declar'd that without obedience and holiness of life no man shall ever see the Lord. And this very thing, that it is the constitution and appointment of God, might be argument enough to us (if there were no other) to convince us of the necessity of obeying the Laws of God in order to our happiness, and to persuade us thereunto. For eternal life is the gift of God, and he may do what he will with his own. He is master of his own favours and may dispense them upon what terms and conditions he pleases. But it is no hard condition that he hath imposed upon us. If Religion brought no advantages to us in this world, yet the happiness of Heaven is so great as will abundantly recompence all our pains and endeavours; there is temptation enough in the reward to engage any man in the work. Had God thought fit to have impos'd the most grievous and difficult things upon us, ought we not to have submitted to them and to have undertaken them with cheerfulness upon such great and glorious encouragements? As *Naaman's* servants said to him in another case, *Had he bid thee do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it?* So if God had said that without Poverty and actual martyrdom *no man shall see the Lord*, would not any man that believes Heaven and Hell and understands what these words signify and what it is to escape extreme and eternal misery, and to enjoy unspeakable and endless glory, have been willing to accept these conditions? *How much more, when he hath only said, Wash and be clean; and Let every man that hath this hope in Him, purify himself as he is pure?* But God hath not dealt thus with us, nor is the imposing of this condition of eternal life a mere arbitrary constitution, therefore I shall endeavour to shew,

2^{dly}, That a Religious and Holy life doth from the very nature and reason of the thing conduce to our future happiness, by way of necessary disposition and preparation of us for it. We cannot be otherwise happy, but by our conformity to God, without this we cannot possibly love him nor find any pleasure or happiness in communion with him. For we cannot love a nature contrary to our own, nor delight to converse with it. Therefore Religion, in order to the fitting of us for the happiness of the next life, does design to mortify our lusts and passions, and to restrain us from the inordinate love of the gross and sensual delights of this world; to call off our minds from these inferior things, and to raise them to higher and more spiritual objects, that we may be disposed for the happiness of the other world, and taught to relish the delights of it; whereas should we set our hearts only upon these things, and be able to taste no pleasure in any thing but what is sensual and earthly, we must needs be extremely miserable

ble when we come into the other world, because we should meet with nothing to entertain our selves withal, no employment suitable to our disposition, no pleasure that would agree with our deprav'd appetites and vicious inclinations. All that Heaven and happiness signifies is unsuitable to a wicked man, and therefore could be no felicity to him. But this I shall have occasion to speak more fully to in my last Discourse.

From all that hath been said, the reasonableness of Religion clearly appears which tends so directly to the happiness of men, and is upon all accounts calculated for our benefit. Let but all things be truly considered and cast up and it will be found that there is no advantage to any man from an irreligious and vicious course of Life. I challenge any one to instance in any real benefit that ever came to him this way. Let the sinner declare what he hath found by experience. Hath lewdness and intemperance been more for his health than if he had liv'd chastly and soberly? Hath fallshood and injustice prov'd at the long run more for the advancement and security of his estate, than truth and honesty would have done? Hath any vice that he hath lived in made him more true friends, and gain'd him a better reputation in the world than the practice of holiness and virtue would have done? Hath he found *that* peace and satisfaction of mind in an evil course, and *that* quiet enjoyment of himself, and comfortable assurance of God's favour, and good hopes of his future condition, which a Religious and virtuous life would have given him? Nay on the contrary, have not some of his vices weaken'd his body and broken his Health, have not others dissipated his estate, and reduc'd him to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemish a man's reputation, and make him either hated or despis'd, and that not only by the wise and the virtuous but even by the generality of men? But was ever any wicked man free from the stings of a guilty conscience and the torment of a restless and uneasy mind, from the secret dread of Divine displeasure, and of the vengeance of another world? Let the sinner freely speak the very inward sense of his soul in this matter, and spare not; and I doubt not, if he will deal clearly and impartially, but that he will acknowledge all this to be true, and is able to confirm it from his own sad experience. For this is the natural fruit of sin and the present revenge which it takes upon sinners, besides that fearful punishment which shall be inflicted on them in another life.

What reason then can any man pretend against Religion, when it is so apparently for the benefit not only of human society but of every particular person, when there is no real interest of this world but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and pursued to as great advantage, nay usually to far greater, by a man that *lives soberly and righteously and godly in the world*, than by any one that leads the contrary course of life? Let no man then say, with those prophane persons whom the Prophet speaks of, *It is in vain to serve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his Commandments?* Mal. 3. 14. God has not been so hard a master to us that we have reason thus to complain of him. He hath given us no Laws but what are for our good, nay so gracious hath he been to us as to link together our duty and our interest, and to make those very things the instances of our obedience which are the natural means and causes of our happiness. The Devil was so far in the right, when he charg'd *Job* that he did not *serve God for nought*. 'Tis he himself that is the hard master and makes men serve him for nought, who rewards his drudges and slaves with nothing but shame and sorrow and misery. But God requires no man's service upon hard and unreasonable terms. The
I greatest

greatest part of our work is a present reward to it self, and for whatever else we do or suffer for him, he offers us abundant consideration. And if men did but truly and wisely love themselves they would upon this very ground if there were no other, become Religious. For when all is done there is no man can serve his own interest better than by serving God. Religion conduceth both to our present and future happiness, and when the Gospel chargeth us with piety towards God, and justice and charity towards men, and temperance and chastity in reference to our selves, the true interpretation of these Laws is this, God requires of men in order to their eternal happiness that they should do those things which tend to their temporal welfare, that is, in plainer words, he promises to make us happy for ever upon condition that we will but do that which is best for our selves in this World. To conclude, Religion is founded in the interest of men rightly apprehended. So that if *the God of this World* and the lusts of men did not *blind their eyes*, so as to render them unfit to discern their true interest, it would be impossible, so long as men love themselves and desire their own happiness to keep them from being religious; for they could not but conclude that to be their interest, and being so convinc'd they would resolve to pursue it and stick to it.

S E R M O N V.

The Excellency of the Christian Religion.

P H I L. III. 8.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

IN the beginning of this Chapter the *Apostle* makes a comparison between the *Jewish* and the Christian Religion, and shews the Christian to be in truth and substance what the *Jewish* was only in type and shadow, v. 3. *We are the Circumcision which worship God in the spirit.* And then he enumerates the several privileges he was partaker of by virtue of his being born in the *Jewish* Church, v. 4, 5, 6. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, &c.* And yet he tells us he was contented to forgo all these advantages for Christ and the Christian Religion, v. 7. *But what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ.* And not only these, but if there were any thing else that men value in this world he was willing to hazard that also upon the same account, v. 8. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*

In which words the *Apostle* declares the high esteem he had for the Christian Religion which he calls *the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*; the excellency whereof appear'd so great to him that he valued nothing in comparison of the advantages which he had by the knowledge of it.

My design at this time from this Text is to represent the excellency of this knowledge of the Christian Religion above that of any other Religion or Institution in the world. And here I shall not consider the external evidence which we have of the truth of Christianity and of the Divinity of its doctrine, in which respect it hath incomparably the advantage of any other Religion: but only the internal excellency of the Doctrine it self, abstracting from the Divine authority of it: And that in these four respects:

First, As it does more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion.

Secondly, As it gives us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives.

Thirdly, As it propounds to us more powerful Arguments to persuade men to the obedience of this Law.

Fourthly, As it furnishes us with better motives and considerations to patience and contentedness under the evils and afflictions of this life. Now these are the greatest advantages that any Religion can have; To give men right apprehensions of God, a perfect rule of good life, and efficacious arguments to persuade men to be good, and patiently to bear the evils and sufferings of this life. And these shall be the heads of my following discourse.

I. The Christian Religion doth more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, than any Religion ever did. And to have right apprehensions of God is the great foundation of all Religion. For according as mens notions of God are such will their Religion be. If men have gross and false conceptions of God their Religion will be absurd and superstitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natur'd Being arm'd with infinite power, one that delights in the misery and ruin of his Creatures and is ready to take all advantages against them, they may fear him but they will hate him; and they will be apt to be such towards one another as they fancy God to be towards them, for all Religion doth naturally incline men to imitate him whom they worship.

Now the Christian Religion gives us a more perfect, and a more lovely character of God than any Religion ever did. It represents him to us as a pure Spirit, (which the Heathens did not generally believe) and that he is to be worshipp'd in such a manner as is most suitable to his spiritual nature, (which not only the Heathens but even the *Jews* themselves were extremely mistaken about) *God is a spirit* (says our Saviour) *and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* It is true indeed God himself did command sacrifices to the *Jews*, and all those external and troublesome observances of which their Religion did consist: But then it is to be consider'd that he did not institute this way of Worship because it was most suitable to his own nature, but because of the carnality of their hearts and the proneness of that people to Idolatry. God did not prescribe these things because they were best, but because the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better. And this the Scripture gives us several intimations of, *Thou desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt-offerings*, saith David: And elsewhere more expressly to this purpose; *I spake not unto your Fathers* (says God by the Prophet *Jeremiah*) *nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice:* A sufficient intimation that God did not primarily intend to appoint this way of worship, and to impose it upon them as that which was most proper and agreeable to him, but that he condescended to it as most accommodate to their present state and inclination. And in this sense also some understand what God says to the same people by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he gave them statutes that were not good.

Psal. 51.

16.

Jer. 7. 22.

Ezek. 20.

25.

And as the Christian Religion gives a more perfect, so a more amiable and lovely character of the Divine nature. No Religion that ever was in the world does so fully represent the goodness of God and his tender love to mankind, which is the best and most powerful argument to the love of God. The Heathens did generally dread God, and looked upon him as fierce and cruel and revengeful; and therefore they endeavoured to appease him by the horrid and barbarous sacrifices of men, and of their own Children. And all along in the *Old Testament* God is generally represented as very strict and severe. But there are no where so plain and full declarations of his mercy and love to the sons of men as are made in the *Gospel*. In the *Old Testament* God is usually stiled *the Lord of Hosts, the great and the terrible God*: But in the *New Testament* he is represented to us by milder titles, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all consolations; the God of all patience, the God of love and peace*; nay he is said to be *love it self and to dwell in love*. And this difference between the stile of the *Old* and *New Testament* is so remarkable, that one of the greatest *Sects* in the Primitive Church (I mean that of the *Gnosticks*) did upon this very ground found their *heresy* of two Gods; the one evil and fierce and cruel,

cruel, whom they call'd the God of the *Old Testament*; the *other* good and kind and merciful, whom they call'd the God of the *New*. So great a difference is there between the representations which are made of God in the Books of the *Jewish* and the Christian Religion, as to give at least some colour and pretence for an imagination of two Gods.

II. Christian Religion hath given us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives. It hath made our duty more plain and certain in many instances, than either the Philosophy of the *Heathen*, or the precepts of *Moses* had done. It commands universal love and kindness and good will among men, a readiness to forgive our greatest enemies, *to do good to them that hate us, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.* And does inculcate these precepts more vehemently, and forbid malice and hatred and revenge and contention more strictly and peremptorily than any Religion ever did before: as will appear to any one that does but attentively read our *Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount*.

And as Christianity hath given us a more *certain* so likewise a more *perfect* Law for the government of our lives. All the precepts of it are reasonable and wise, requiring such duties of us as are suitable to the light of nature and do approve themselves to the best reason of mankind, such as have their foundation in the nature of God, and are an imitation of the Divine excellencies, such as tend to the perfection of human nature and to raise the minds of men to the highest pitch of goodness and virtue. The Laws of our Religion are such as are generally useful and beneficial to the world, as do tend to the outward peace and the health, to the inward comfort and contentment, and to the universal happiness of mankind. They command nothing that is unnecessary and burdensome, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the *Jewish* Religion, but what is reasonable, and useful, and substantial: And they omit nothing that may tend to the glory of God or the welfare of men, nor do they restrain us in any thing but what is contrary either to the regular inclinations of nature or to our reason and true interest. They forbid us nothing but what is base and unworthy, to serve our humours and passions, to reproach our understandings and to make our selves fools and beasts; in a word, nothing but what tends either to our private harm and prejudice, or to publick disorder and confusion.

And that this is the tenor of the Laws of the Gospel will appear to any one from our *Saviour's* Sermons and Discourses: particularly that upon the Mount; wherein he charges his Disciples and followers to be humble, and meek, and righteous, and merciful, and pure, and peaceable, and patient under sufferings and persecutions, and good and kind to all even to those that are evil and injurious to us, and to endeavour to excel in all goodness and virtue. This will appear likewise from the Writings of the holy Apostles; I will instance but in some few passages in them. St. Paul represents to us the design of the Christian doctrine in a very few words, but of admirable sense and weight; *The grace of God that bringeth salvation* Tit. 2. 11, *hath appear'd to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts* 12. *we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World.* The same Apostle makes this the main and fundamental condition of the Covenant of the Gospel on our part, *Let every one that names the name of Christ* 1 Tim. 2. 19. *depart from iniquity.* St. James describes the Christian doctrine (which he calls *the wisdom that is from above*) by these characters, *It is first pure, then* James 3. 17. *peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality,*

² Pet. 1. 3, 4. *partiality, and without hypocrisy. St. Peter calls the Gospel, the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby (saith he) are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of a divine nature having escap'd the corruption that is in the world through lust; and upon this consideration he exhorts them to give all diligence to add to their faith the several virtues of a good life, without which he tells them they are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will conclude with that full and comprehensive Passage of St. Paul to the Philippians, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, (ὅσα σεμνὰ, whatsoever things are of venerable esteem) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure (or chaste) whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.*

But the perfection and the reasonableness of the Laws of Christianity will most plainly appear by taking a brief survey of them. And they may all be referr'd to these two general heads. They are either such as tend to the perfection of human nature and to make men singly and personally good, or such as tend to the peace and happiness of human Society.

First, Such as tend to the perfection of human nature and to make men good singly and personally consider'd. And the precepts of this kind may be distributed likewise into two sorts, such as enjoin Piety towards God, or such as require the good order and government of our selves in respect of the enjoyments and pleasures of this life.

1. Such as enjoin Piety towards God. All the duties of Christian Religion which respect God are no other but what natural light prompts men to, excepting the two Sacraments (which are of great use and significance in the Christian Religion) and praying to God in the name and by the mediation of Jesus Christ. For the sum of natural Religion as it refers more immediately to God is this, That we should inwardly reverence and love God, and that we should express our inward reverence and love to him by external worship and adoration, and by our readiness to receive and obey all the revelations of his will: And that we should testify our dependance upon him, and our confidence of his goodness, by constant prayers and supplications to him for mercy and help for our selves and others; And that we should acknowledge our obligations to him for the many favours and benefits which every day and every minute we receive from him, by continual praises and thanksgivings: And that on the contrary we should not entertain any unworthy thoughts of God, nor give that honour and reverence which is due to him, to any other; that we should not worship him in any manner that is either unsuitable to the excellency and perfection of his nature, or contrary to his reveal'd will; that we should carefully avoid the prophane and irreverent use of his Name by cursing, or customary swearing, and take heed of the neglect or contempt of his Worship or any thing belonging to it. This is the sum of the first part of natural Religion, and these are the general heads of those duties which every man's reason tells him he owes to God: And these are the very things which the Christian Religion does expressly require of us, as might be evidenc'd from particular Texts in the *New Testament*. So that there is nothing in this part of Christianity but what agrees well with the reason of mankind.

2. Such precepts as require the good order and government of our selves in respect of the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. Christian Religion commands whatsoever things are pure and chaste, all manner of sobriety and temperance and moderation in reference to our appetites and passions; and

and forbids whatever is unnatural, and unreasonable, and unhealthful in the use of pleasures and of any of God's creatures. Hither belong all those Texts which require of us that we should *not walk after the flesh but after the spirit*, that we should *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, that we should *be holy in all manner of conversation*. St. John distributes the lusts and irregular appetites of men into three kinds, voluptuousness, covetousness, and ambition, answerable to the three sorts of tempting objects that are in the world, pleasures, riches and honours. *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, &c.* And Christianity doth strictly forbid all these, *Take heed and beware of Covetousness* (says our Saviour, and he adds this excellent reason) *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. It forbids pride and ambition and vain-glory and commands humility and modesty and condescension to others; *Learn of me* (says our Saviour) *for I am meek and lowly in spirit; Mind not high things, but condescend to them that are of low degree; Let nothing be done through vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*. And in reference to sensual pleasures it forbids all irregularity and excess, and strictly enjoins purity and temperance; cautioning us *to take heed lest we be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness*; charging us *to walk decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness; to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*. Now all these precepts do not only tend to beget in us such virtues and dispositions as are reasonable and suitable to our nature and every way for our temporal convenience and advantage, but such as do likewise exceedingly dispose us to piety and religion by purifying our souls from the dross and filth of sensual delights. For covetousness debaseth a man's spirit, and sinks it into the earth; intemperance and lust cloud a man's understanding, and indispose it for the contemplation of things spiritual and divine. Thus you see how the Precepts of Christianity do tend to the perfection of human nature, considering men singly and personally.

Secondly, The other sort of Precepts are such as tend to the peace and happiness of human Society. And the reason of mankind can devise nothing more proper to this end than the Laws of Christianity are. For they command all those virtues which are apt to sweeten the spirits and allay the passions and animosities of men one towards another. They require us *to love our neighbour* (that is, every man in the world, even our greatest enemies) *as our selves*. And for this end among others was the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, the Feast of love instituted: that by commemorating the love of our dying Saviour, who laid down his Life for his enemies, we might be put in mind how we ought to love one another.

And by this Law of loving all men even our enemies, Christian Religion discovers it self not only to be the most innocent and harmless, but the most generous and best-natur'd Institution that ever was in the world. For in pursuance of this general Precept it commands us, *to do good to all men; if it be possible, and as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men; to be kind one to another, ready to gratify and oblige men; to be tender-hearted and compassionate towards those that are in want or misery, and ready to supply and relieve them; to sympathize with one another in our joys and sorrows, to mourn with those that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice; to bear one another's burdens, and to forbear one another in love; to be easily reconcil'd to them that have offended us, and to be ready to forgive from our hearts the greatest injuries that can be done to us, and that without bounds and limits even to seventy seven times; as our Saviour expresseth it.*

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Rom. 8. 1.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

1 Pet. 1.

15.

1 John 2.

16.

Luke 12.

15.

Mat. 11.

29.

Rom. 12.

16.

Phil. 2. 3.

Luke 21.

36.

Rom. 13.

13.

1 Pet. 2.

11.

The Laws of Christianity do likewise secure both the private interests of men and the publick peace, by confirming and enforcing all the dictates of nature concerning Justice and Equity, and our doing to others as we would have them to do to us ; and by commanding obedience to human Laws which decide mens rights and submission to government under pain of Damnation : And by forbidding whatever is contrary to these, violence and oppression, defrauding and over-reaching one another, perfidiousness and treachery, breach of trusts, oaths or promises, undutifulness to superiors, sedition and rebellion against Magistracy and Authority : And if there be any thing else that is apt to disturb the peace of the world and to alienate the affections of men from one another, as sowness of disposition, and rudeness of behaviour, censoriousness and sinister interpretation of things, all cross and distasteful humours, and whatever else may render the conversation of men grievous and uneasy to one another : All these are either expressly, or by clear consequence and deduction forbidden in the New Testament.

And now what could any Religion do more towards the reforming of the dispositions and manners of men ? What Laws can be devis'd more proper and effectual to advance the nature of man to its highest perfection, to procure the tranquility of mens minds and the peace and happiness of the world, than these precepts of Christianity are ? Several of which (as those of *loving our enemies*, of *not revenging injuries*, of *rendering good for evil*, &c.) tho' they have been esteem'd reasonable by some of the wisest among the Heathen, yet by reason of the degeneracy of the world, and of the obscurity and uncertainty of human reason, they never obtain'd to have the estimation and force of natural Laws. So that we owe to Christianity the discovery of the most certain and perfect Rule of life that ever the world was acquainted withal.

III. Christian Religion propounds the most powerful arguments to persuade men to the obedience of these Laws. The Gospel offers such considerations to us, as are fit to work very forcibly upon two of the most swaying and governing passions in the mind of man, our hopes and our fears: To encourage our hopes it gives us the highest assurance of the greatest and most lasting happiness, in case of obedience ; and to awaken our fear it threatens sinners with the most dreadful and durable torments, in case of disobedience. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality*, it promiseth *eternal life* : *But unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, it threatens *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*. And this is that which makes the doctrine of the Gospel so powerful an instrument for the reforming of the world, that it proposes to men such glorious rewards and such terrible punishments as no Religion ever did ; and to make the consideration of them more effectual, it gives us far greater assurance of the reality, and certainty of these things than ever the world had before. This account the *Apostle* gives us of the success and efficacy of the Gospel upon the minds of men, and for this reason he calls it *the power of God unto salvation*, because therein *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Before the revelation of the Gospel the wickedness and impenitency of the Heathen world was a much more excusable thing, because they were in a great measure ignorant of the rewards of another life, and had generally but very uncertain and obscure apprehensions of those things which urge men most powerfully to forsake their sins, and are the most prevalent arguments

Rom. 2.
7, 8.

Rom. 1.
16, 18.

guments to a good life. So St. Paul tells the *Athenians* the most knowing among the Heathen, *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* The Resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead hath given the world that full assurance of another life after this and of a future Judgment which it never had before, for *He* whom God rais'd from the dead did declare and testify that *it was he who was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.* And the firm belief of a future Judgment, which shall render to every man according to his deeds, if it be well consider'd, is to a reasonable nature the most forcible motive of all other to a good life; because it is taken from the consideration of the greatest and most lasting happiness and misery that human nature is capable of. So that the Laws of Christianity have the firmest sanction of any Laws in the world to secure the obedience and observance of them: For what can restrain men from sin if the terrors of the Lord and the evident danger of eternal destruction will not? What encouragement can be given to goodness beyond the hopes of Heaven and the assurance of an endless felicity?

Acts 17:
30, 31.Acts 10:
42.

IV. The Christian Religion furnisheth us with the best motives and considerations to patience and contentedness under the evils and afflictions of this life. This was one great design of Philosophy, to support men under the evils and calamities which this life is incident to, and to fortify their spirits against sufferings. And to this end the wisest among the Heathens rack'd their wits and cast about every way, they advanced all sorts of principles and manag'd every little argument and consideration to the utmost advantage. And yet after all these attempts they have not been able to give any considerable comfort and ease to the mind of man under any of the great evils and pressures of this life. *The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it.* All the wise sayings and advices which Philosophers could muster up to this purpose have prov'd ineffectual to the common People and the generality of mankind, and have help'd only to support some few stout and obstinate minds, which without the assistance of Philosophy would have held up pretty well of themselves.

Some of the Philosophers have run so far back for arguments of comfort against pain as to call every thing into question, and to doubt whether there were any such thing as sense or pain. And yet for all that when any great evil has been upon them, they would certainly sigh and groan as pitifully and cry out as loud as other men.

Others have sought to ease themselves of all the evil of affliction by disputing subtilly against it, and pertinaciously maintaining that afflictions are no real evils but only in opinion and imagination, and therefore a wise man ought not to be troubled at them. But he must be a very wise man that can forbear being troubled at things that are very troublesome. And yet thus *Possidonius* (as *Tully* tells us) distinguish'd, he could not deny pain to be very troublesome, but for all that he was resolv'd never to acknowledge it to be an evil. But sure it is a very slender comfort that relies upon this nice distinction between things being troublesome and being evils, when all the evil of affliction lies in the trouble it creates to us. But when the best that can be is made of this argument, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away as a stupid Paradox and against the common sense of mankind.

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Others

Others have endeavoured to delude their troubles by a graver way of reasoning, that these things are fatal and necessary and therefore no body ought to be troubled at them, it being in vain to be troubled at that which we cannot help. And yet perhaps it might as reasonably be said on the other side that this very consideration, *that a thing cannot be help'd*, is one of the justest causes of trouble to a wise man. For it were some kind of comfort if these evils were to be avoided, because then we might be careful to prevent them another time; but if they be necessary then my trouble is as fatal as the calamity that occasions it; and though I know it in vain to be troubled for that which I cannot help yet I cannot chuse but be afflicted. It was a smart reply that *Augustus* made to one that ministred this comfort to him of the fatality of things, *Hoc ipsum est* (says he) *quod me male habet*, this was so far from giving any ease to his mind that *this was the very thing that troubled him*.

Others have try'd to divert and entertain the troubles of other men by pretty and plausible sayings, such as this, *That if evils are long they are but light, if sharp but short*, and a hundred such like. Now I am apt to imagine that it is but a very small comfort that a plain and ordinary man, lying under a sharp fit of the Stone for a week together, receives from this fine Sentence. For what pleasure soever men that are at ease and leisure may take in being the Authors of witty sayings, I doubt it is but poor consolation that a man under great and stinging afflictions finds from them.

The best moral argument to patience, in my opinion, is the advantage of patience it self. To bear evils as quietly as we can is the way to make them lighter and easier. But to toss and fling and to be restless is good for nothing but to fret and enrage our pain, to gall our sores and to make the burthen that is upon us sit more uneasy. But this is properly no consideration of comfort, but an art of managing our selves under afflictions so as not to make them more grievous than indeed they are.

But now the arguments which Christianity propounds to us are such as are a just and reasonable encouragement to men to bear sufferings patiently. Our Religion sets before us not the example of a stupid *Stoick*, who had by obstinate principles harden'd himself against all sense of pain beyond the common measures of humanity, but an example that lies level to all mankind, of a man like our selves, that had a tender sense of the least suffering and yet patiently endur'd the greatest; of *Jesus the Author and finisher of our Faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*.

God thought it expedient that the first Christians should by great hardships and persecutions be train'd up for glory, and to animate and encourage them hereto the *Captain of our Salvation was crown'd by sufferings*. Much more should the consideration of this pattern arm us with patience against the common and ordinary calamities of this life, especially if we consider his example with this advantage, that tho' his sufferings were wholly undeserv'd, and not for himself but for us, yet he bore them patiently.

But the main consideration of all is, the glory which shall follow our sufferings as the reward of *them*, if they be for God and his cause; and if upon any other innocent account, as reward of our patience. *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*. Christian Religion hath secur'd us that we shall be infinite gainers by our sufferings. And who would not be content to suffer upon terms of such advantage? *to pass through many tribulations into the kingdom of God*, and to endure a short affliction for an endless happiness? The assurance

Heb. 1.
22.

Heb. 11. 10.

2 Cor. 4
17.

urance of a future blessedness is a cordial that will revive our spirits more in the day of adversity, than all the wise sayings and considerations of Philosophy.

These are the arguments which Christianity propounds to us, and they are firm and sound at the bottom; they have strength and substance in them, and are apt to work upon human nature, and the most ordinary understanding is capable of the force of them. In the strength and virtue of this great example, and in contemplation of this glorious reward, with what resolution and cheerfulness, with what courage and patience did vast numbers of all sorts of people in the first Ages of Christianity, not only men but women, not only those of greater spirit and more generous education but those of the poorest and lowest condition, not only the learned and the wise but the ignorant and illiterate, encounter all the rage and malice of the world and embrace torments and death? Had the precepts and counsels of Philosophy ever any such effect upon the minds of men? I will conclude this with a passage in the life of *Lipsius*, who was a great studier and admirer of the *Stoical* Philosophy. When he lay upon his death-bed, and one of his friends who came to visit him told him that he needed not use arguments to persuade him to patience under his pains, the Philosophy which he had studied so much would furnish him with motives enough to that purpose, he answers him with this Ejaculation, *Domine Jesu, da mihi patientiam Christianam, Lord Jesus, give me Christian patience.* No patience like to that which the considerations of Christianity are apt to work in us.

And now I have as briefly and plainly as I could endeavour'd to represent to you the excellency of the Christian Religion, both in respect of the clear discoveries which it makes to us of the nature of God which is the great foundation of all Religion, and likewise in respect of the perfection of its Laws and the power of its arguments to persuade men both to obey and suffer the will of God. By which you may see, what the proper tendency and design of this Religion is, and what the Laws and precepts of it would make men if they would truly observe them and live according to them, substantially Religious towards God, chaste and temperate, patient and contented in reference to themselves and the dispensations of God's providence towards them, just and honest, kind and peaceable and good-natur'd towards all men. In a word, the Gospel describes God to us in all respects such a one as we would wish him to be, gives us such Laws as every man that understands himself would chuse to live by, propounds such arguments to persuade to the obedience of these Laws as no man that wisely loves himself and hath any tenderness for his own interest and happiness either in this world or the other, can refuse to be mov'd withal.

And now methinks I may with some confidence challenge any Religion in the world to shew such a compleat body and collection of holy and reasonable Laws establish'd upon such promises and threatnings as the Gospel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion that can reasonably pretend to an equal or a greater confirmation than the Gospel hath, a Religion the precepts and promises and threatnings whereof are calculated to make men wiser and better, more temperate and more chaste, more meek and more patient, more kind and more just, than the laws and motives of Christianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce such a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man shew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the seal of such miracles as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty so perfectly, and

without the mixture of any thing that is unreasonable, or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reason necessary to be done, and abridgeth us of no lawful pleasure without offering us abundant recompence for our present self-denial; a Book the rules whereof, if they were practis'd, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and sober, more just and fair in their dealings, better friends and better neighbours, better magistrates and better subjects and better in all relations, and which does offer to the understanding of men more powerful arguments to persuade them to be all this; let any man, I say, shew me such a Book, and I will lay aside the Scripture and preach out of *that*.

And do we not all profess to be of this excellent Religion, and to study and believe this holy Book of the Scriptures! But alas! who will believe that we do so, that shall look upon the actions and consider the lives of the greatest part of Christians? How grossly and openly do many of us contradict the plain precepts of the Gospel, by our ungodliness and worldly lusts, by living intemperately or unjustly, or prophanely in this present world? As if *the grace of God which brings salvation*, had never appear'd to us, as if we had never heard of Heaven or Hell, or believ'd not one word that the Scripture says concerning them, as if we were in no expectation of *the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness, and who will bestow mighty rewards upon those who faithfully serve him, but will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

Let us not then deceive our selves by pretending to this *excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord*, if we do not frame our lives according to it. For tho we know *these things* never so well, yet we are not *happy* unless we do them: Nay, we are but the more miserable for knowing them if we do them not; Therefore it concerns every one of us to consider seriously what we believe; and whether our belief of the Christian Religion have its due effect upon our lives. If not, all the Precepts and Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel will rise up in judgment against us, and the Articles of our Faith will be so many Articles of Accusation, and the great weight of our charge will be this that we did not obey that Gospel which we profess'd to believe, that we made confession of the Christian Faith but liv'd like Heathens. Not to believe the Christian Religion, after so great evidence and confirmation as God hath given to it, is very unreasonable; but to believe it to be true, and yet to live as if it were false, is the greatest repugnancy and contradiction that can be. He that does not believe Christianity, either hath, or thinks he hath some reason for withholding his assent from it. But he that believes it, and yet lives contrary to it, knows that he hath no reason for what he does, and is convinc'd that he ought to do otherwise: And he is a miserable man indeed that does those things, for the doing of which he continually stands condemn'd by his own mind. And accordingly God will deal more severely with such persons. He will pardon a thousand defects in our understandings, if they do not proceed from gross carelessness and neglect of our selves; but the faults of our wills have no excuse, because we knew to do better and were convinc'd in our minds that we ought not to have done so.

Dost thou believe that *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, and dost thou still allow thy self in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*? Art thou convinc'd that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, and dost thou still persist in a wicked course? Art thou
fully

fully persuaded that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous person shall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Christ*, and dost thou for all that continue to practise these vices? What canst thou say (*man*) why it should not be to thee according to thy faith? If it so fall out that thou art miserable and undone for ever, thou hast no reason to be surpriz'd as if some unexpected thing had happen'd to thee. It is but with thee just as thou believed'st it would be when thou didst these things. For how could'st thou expect that God should accept of thy good belief when thou didst so notoriously contradict it by a bad life? How couldst thou look for other but that God should condemn thee for the doing of those things for which thine own Conscience did condemn thee all the while thou wast doing of them; When we come into the other world there is no consideration that will sting our consciences more cruelly than this, that we did wickedly when we knew to have done better, and chose to make our selves miserable when we understood the way to have been happy. To conclude, we Christians have certainly the best and the holiest, the wisest and most reasonable Religion in the world; but then we are in the worst condition of all mankind, if the best Religion in the world do not make us good.

S E R M O N VI.

The Precepts of Christianity not grievous.

I JOHN V. 3.

—And his commandments are not grievous.

ONE of the great prejudices which men have entertain'd against the Christian Religion is this, that it lays upon men *heavy burthens and grievous to be born*, that the Laws of it are very strict and severe, difficult to be kept and yet dangerous to be broken; That it requires us to govern and keep under our passions, and to contradict many times our strongest inclinations and desires, *to cut off our right hand and to pluck out our right eye, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*; to forgive the greatest injuries that are done to us, and to make reparation for the least that we do to others, to be contented with our condition, patient under sufferings, and ready to sacrifice our dearest interests in this world, and even our very lives, in the cause of God and Religion: All these seem to be *hard sayings and grievous commandments*.

For the removal of this prejudice I have chosen these words of the Apostle, which expressly tell us the contrary, that *the commandments of God are not grievous*.

And though this be a great truth if it be impartially consider'd, yet it is also a great paradox to men of corrupt minds and vicious practices, who are prejudic'd against Religion and the holy Laws of God by their interest and their lusts. This seems a strange *proposition* to those who look upon Religion at a distance and never try'd the experiment of a holy life, who measure the Laws of God not by the intrinsical goodness and equity of them, but by the reluctancy and opposition which they find in their own hearts against them.

Upon this account it will be requisite to take some pains to satisfy the reason of men concerning this truth, and if it be possible to make it so evident that those who are unwilling to own it may yet be asham'd to deny it. And methinks I have this peculiar advantage in the argument I have now undertaken, that every reasonable man cannot chuse but wish me success in this attempt, because I undertake the proof of that which it is every man's interest that it should be true: And if I can make it out, this pretence against Religion will not only be baffled but we shall gain a new and forcible argument to persuade men over to it.

Now the easiness or difficulty of the observation of any Laws or commands depends chiefly upon these *three* things.

First, Upon the Nature of the Laws themselves and their suitableness or unsuitableness to those to whom they are given.

Secondly,

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Secondly, Upon the ability or weakness of those on whom these Laws are impos'd for the keeping of them. For easiness and difficulty are relative terms and refer to some power, and a thing may be difficult to a weak man which yet may be easy to the same person when assisted with a greater strength.

Thirdly, Upon the encouragement that is given to the observation of them. For the proposal of great rewards does very much qualify and allay the difficulty of any undertaking.

Now if I can make these three things evident; 1. That the Laws of God are reasonable, that is, suitable to our nature and advantageous to our interest. 2. That we are not destitute of sufficient power and ability for the performance of them. And 3. That we have the greatest encouragements to this purpose: Then have we all imaginable reason to assent to the truth of this Proposition that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

I. The Laws of God are reasonable, that is, suitable to our nature and advantageous to our interest. 'Tis true God hath a sovereign right over us as we are his creatures, and by virtue of this right he might without injustice have impos'd difficult tasks upon us and have requir'd hard things at our hands. But in making Laws for us he hath not made use of this right. He hath commanded us nothing in the Gospel that is either unsuitable to our reason, or prejudicial to our interest; nay, nothing that is severe and against the grain of our nature, but when either the apparent necessity of our interest does require it, or an extraordinary reward is promis'd to our obedience. *He hath shew'd thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This is the sum of the natural Law, that we should behave our selves reverently and obediently towards the Divine Majesty, and justly and charitably towards men; and that in order to the fitting of us for the better discharge of these duties, we should govern our selves in the use of sensual delights with temperance and moderation. And if we go over the Laws of Christianity, we shall find that, excepting a very few particulars, they enjoyn the very same things; only they have made our duty more clear and certain. But this I have had occasion to make out largely in the foregoing Discourse, and therefore I shall say the less to it now.

As to the several parts of God's worship and service, *prayer and thanksgiving, bearing and reading the Word of God, and receiving of the Sacrament*; these are all no less for our own comfort and advantage than for the honour of God and Religion. And there is nothing of difficulty or trouble in the external performance of them, but what hypocrisy can make tolerable to it self: And certainly they must be not only much more easy, but even delightful, when they are directed by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections.

As for those Laws of Religion which concern our duty to our selves, as *temperance and chastity*; or to others, as the several branches of *justice and charity*, comprehended in those general rules, *of loving our neighbour as our selves, and of doing to others as we would have them to do to us*: There is nothing in all these Laws but what is most reasonable and fit to be done by us, nothing but what if we were to consult our own interest and happiness, and did rightly understand our selves, we would chuse for our selves; nothing but what is easy to be understood, and as easy to be practis'd by an honest and a willing mind.

Now

Now the practice of all these is suitable to our nature, and agreeable to the frame of our understandings; proper to our condition and circumstances in this world, and preparatory to our happiness in the next. And no man's reason did ever dictate to him the contrary of any of these; that it is fit for a Creature not to love God, to be undutiful to his great Sovereign, and ungrateful to his best benefactor; that it is reasonable for a man to debauch himself by intemperance and brutish sensuality; to hate, defraud and oppress other men. Our very natural reason, if we will but listen to the dictates of it, is an enemy to all these sins, and a law against all these vices.

And as the practice of all piety and virtue is agreeable to our reason, so is it likewise for the interest of mankind; both of private persons, and of publick Societies, as I have already shown. Some virtues plainly tend to the preservation of our health, others to the improvement and security of our estates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds; and which is somewhat more strange, to the advancement of our esteem and reputation; for though the world be generally bad, and men are apt to approve nothing so much as what they do themselves; yet, I know not how it comes to pass, men are commonly so just to virtue and goodness, as to praise it in others even when they do not practise it themselves.

And as for those precepts of Christianity which seem to be most harsh and difficult at first appearance, (as *repentance* and *restitution*, *mortification* of our *lusts* and *passions*, *humility*, *patience* and *contentedness* with our condition, and *resignation* of our selves to the will of God; *forgiving* and *loving* our *enemies*, and *self-denial* for the cause of God and Religion) if we look well into them and consider thoroughly the nature and tendency of them, even these will appear to be both reasonable in themselves, and upon one account or other really for our advantage.

What more reasonable than *repentance*, than that a man when he hath done amiss and contrary to his duty should be heartily sorry for it, and resolve to do so no more? And how grievous soever it be, it is necessary, being the only way to pardon and peace. And in case our offence against God hath been complicated with injury to men, it is but reasonable we should make *restitution* as far as we are able, according to the nature of the injury. For without this our repentance is not real, because we have not done what we can to undo our fault as much as we can, or at least to hinder the injurious consequences of it from proceeding any farther? Nor can any man be judg'd to be truly sorry for his sin that retains the profit and advantages of it to himself. Besides, that till reparation be made to the utmost of our power we can have no peace in our own consciences, nor any well-grounded hopes of forgiveness from God.

Mortification of our *lusts* and *passions*, though, like *repentance*, it have something in it that is troublesome, yet nothing that is unreasonable, or really to our prejudice. If we give way to our passions, we do but gratify our selves for the present in order to our future disquiet; but if we resist and conquer them, we lay the foundation of perpetual peace and tranquility in our minds. If we govern our selves in the use of sensual delights by the Laws of God and reason, we shall find our selves more at ease than if we should let loose the reins to our appetites and lusts. For the more we gratify our lusts the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial. *Crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops*, every lust is a kind of hydro-pick distemper, and the more we drink the more we shall thirst. So that by retrenching our inordinate desires we do not rob our selves of any true pleasure, but only prevent the pain and trouble of farther dissatisfaction.

Humility,

Humility, though it may seem to expose a man to some contempt, yet it is truly the readiest way to honour : as on the contrary, *pride* is a most improper and absurd means for the accomplishing of the end it aims at. All other vices do in some measure attain their end ; covetousness does usually raise an estate, and ambitious endeavours do often advance men to high places ; but pride and insolence and contempt of others do infallibly defeat their own design. They aim at respect and esteem but never attain it, for all mankind do naturally hate and slight a proud man.

What more reasonable than *patience* and *contentedness*, and that we should in all things *resign* up our selves to the will of God, who loves us as well as we do our selves, and knows what is good for us better than we do our selves ? this certainly is the best way to prevent anxiety and perplexity of mind, and to make the worst condition as tolerable as it can be, and much more easy than it would be otherwise.

As for that peculiar *Law* of Christianity which forbids *revenge*, and commands us to *forgive injuries* and to *love our enemies*, no man can think it grievous who considers the pleasure and sweetness of love and the glorious victory of overcoming evil with good, and then compares these with the restless torment and perpetual tumults of a malicious and revengeful spirit.

And lastly, *Self-denial for the cause of God and Religion* ; this is neither unreasonable nor to our disadvantage. If we consider our infinite obligations to God, we have no reason to think much to sacrifice to him our dearest interests in this world ; especially if we consider withal, how disproportionably great the reward of our sufferings shall be in another world. Besides that the interest of Religion is of so great concernment to the happiness of mankind, that every man is bound for that reason to assert the truth of it with the hazard of any thing that is most valuable to him in this world.

II. We are not destitute of sufficient power and strength for the performing of God's commands. Had God given us Laws but no power to keep them, his commandments would then indeed have been grievous. 'Tis true we have contracted a great deal of weakness and impotency by our wilful degeneracy from goodness, but that grace which the Gospel offers to us for our assistance is sufficient for us. And this seems to be the particular reason why the Apostle says here in the *Text* that *his commandments are not grievous*, because he offers us an assistance proportionable to the difficulty of his commands, and the necessity of our condition: for it follows immediately after the *Text*, *For whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world*. Therefore the *commandments* of God *are not grievous*, because every Child of God, *that is*, every Christian is endued with a power whereby he is enabled to resist and conquer the temptations of the world. The same Apostle elsewhere encourages Christians upon the same consideration, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*. Though we be encompass'd with many and potent enemies who make it their business to tempt and to deter us from our duty, yet our case is not hard so long as we have a great strength on our side : And this the Apostle tells us is the case of every Christian, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*. Are there legions of Devils who are continually designing and working our ruin ? there are also myriads of good Angels who are more chearful and officious to do us good. For I doubt not, but as those who are bent to do wickedly will never want tempters to urge them on and to push them forward in an evil course ; so on the other hand, those who apply themselves seriously to

1 Joh. 4. 4.

the business of Religion, and yield themselves tractable to good motions, will find the good spirit of God more ready and active to encourage them than the Devil can be to pull them back ; unless we think that God hath given a greater power and a larger commission to the Devil to do men mischief, than to his holy Spirits and his holy Angels for our assistance and encouragement. But then we are to understand that this assistance is only offer'd to men, and not forc'd upon them whether they will or no. For if we beg God's grace but neglect to make use of it, if we implore his assistance for the mortifying of our lusts but will not contribute our own endeavours, God will withdraw his grace and take away his holy Spirit from us. Nay, if after we have begun well we do notoriously slacken our endeavours, we forfeit the Divine assistance : If when by God's grace we have in a good measure conquer'd the first difficulties of Religion, and gain'd some habitual strength against sin ; if after this we grow careless and remiss, and neglect our guard, and lay our selves open to temptations, God's Spirit will not always strive with us : Notwithstanding all the promises of the Gospel, and the mighty assistances there offer'd to us, if we love any lust, and will with *Sampson* lay our head in *Dalilah's* lap, we shall be insensibly robb'd of our strength, and become like other men.

III. We have the greatest encouragement to the observance of God's commands. Two things make any course of life easy ; present pleasure, and the assurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the present comfort and satisfaction of having done our duty ; and for the rest, it offers us the best security that Heaven can give. Now these two must needs make our duty very easy ; a considerable reward in hand, and not only the hopes but the assurance of a far greater recompence hereafter.

1. Present peace and satisfaction of mind, and unexpressible joy and pleasure flowing from the testimony of a good conscience. This is present payment, besides that it is the earnest of a future and greater happiness. And this does naturally spring up in the mind of a good man ; *great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* All acts of piety and virtue are not only delightful for the present, but they leave peace and contentment behind them : a peace that no outward violence can interrupt or take from us. The pleasures of a holy life have moreover this peculiar advantage of all worldly joys, that we shall never be weary of them ; we cannot be cloy'd by the frequent repetition of these pleasures, nor by the long enjoyment of them. I know that some vices pretend to bring great pleasure along with them, and that the delights of a sensual and voluptuous life make a glorious show and are attended with much pomp and noise, like the sports of children and fools which are loud and clamorous ; or, as *Solomon* elegantly compares them, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, which makes a little noise and a sudden blaze that is presently over. But the serious and the manly pleasures, the solid and substantial joys, are only to be found in the ways of Religion and virtue. The most sensual man that ever was in the world never felt his heart touch'd with so delicious and lasting a pleasure as that is which springs from a clear conscience, and a mind fully satisfied with his own Actions.

2. But the great encouragement of all is the assurance of a future reward. The firm persuasion whereof is enough to raise us above any thing in this world, and to animate us with courage and resolution against the greatest difficulties : So the *Apostle* reasons ; *His commandments are not grievous ; for*
what-

whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. The belief of a future happiness and glory was that which made the primitive Christians so victorious over the world, and gave them the courage to resist all the pleasures and terrors of Sense. It cannot be deny'd, but that a Religious course of life is liable to be incumbred with many difficulties which are naturally grievous to flesh and blood. But a Christian is able to comfort himself under all these with the thoughts of his end, which is *everlasting life*. He considers the goodness of God which he believes would not deny him the free enjoyment of the things of this world, were it not that he hath such joys and pleasures in store for him as will abundantly recompence his present self-denial and sufferings.

Let us now put both these together, the *pleasures* of Religion and the *rewards* of it, and they cannot but appear to be a mighty encouragement. With what pleasure does a man that lives a holy and a virtuous life despise the pleasures of sin, and notwithstanding all the allurements of sense persist resolutely in his Course? And how is such a man confirm'd in his purpose and animated in his holy resolution, when he finds that God and his own conscience do applaud his choice; when all along in the course of Religion and a virtuous life, in his conflicts with sin, and resistance of temptations, he hath for his present reward the two great pleasures of innocence and of victory, and for his future encouragement the joyful hopes of a Crown and a Kingdom? A recompence so great, as is sufficient to make a lame man walk, enough to make any one willing to offer violence to his strongest passions and inclinations. A man would be content to strive with himself and to conflict with great difficulties, in hopes of a mighty reward. What poor man would not cheerfully carry a great burthen of gold and silver, that were assur'd to have the greatest share of it for his pains, and thereby to be made a man for ever? Whatever difficulties Religion is attended withal they are all sweeten'd and made easy by the proposal of a great and eternal reward.

But are there no difficulties then in Religion? Is every thing so plain and easy? Are all the ways of virtue so smooth and even as we have here represented them? Hath not our *Saviour* told us, that *strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it*? Does not the *Apostle* say, that *through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God*? And, that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*? And does not the *Scripture* every where speak of *striving* and *wrestling*, and *running*, and *fighting*; of *labouring*, and *watching*, and *giving all diligence*? And is there nothing grievous in all this?

This is a very material objection; and therefore I shall be the more careful to give a satisfactory answer to it. And that I may do it the more distinctly be pleas'd to consider these *six* things. 1. That the suffering of persecution for Religion is an extraordinary case, which did chiefly concern the first Ages of Christianity. 2. That this discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the entrance upon a Religious course. 3. Nor is there any reason it should exclude our after-care and diligence. 4. All the difficulties of Religion are very much mitigated and allayed by hope and by love. 5. There is incomparably more difficulty and trouble in the ways of sin and vice than in the ways of Religion and Virtue. 6. If we do but put virtue and vice, a religious and a wicked course of life in equal circumstances; if we will but suppose a man as much accusom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, then I shall not doubt to pronounce that the advantages of ease and pleasure will be found to be on the side of Religion.

I. The suffering of persecution for Religion is an extraordinary case, and did chiefly concern the first Ages of Christianity. And therefore the general sayings of our Saviour and his Apostles concerning the persecuted state of Christians are to be limited, as doubtless they were intended, principally to those first times, and by no means to be equally extended to all Ages of the Church. At first indeed whoever embrac'd the profession of Christianity did thereby expose themselves to all the sufferings which the power and malice of the world could afflict them withal: But since *the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ*, and the Governors of the world began to be Patrons of the Church, 'tis so far from being universally true that every Christian hath suffer'd the violence of persecution, that it hath been a rare case and happen'd only in some few ages, and to some persons. So that this is accidental to a state of Religion, and therefore ought not to be reckon'd among the ordinary difficulties of it. And when it happens God gives extraordinary supports, and promises mighty rewards to make it tolerable.

II. This discourse concerning the easiness of God's commands does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course, except only in those persons who have had the happiness to be train'd up to Religion by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education. These indeed are freed from a great deal of pains and difficulty which others who are reclaim'd from a bad course of life must expect to undergo. They are in a great measure excused from the pangs of the new birth, from the pains of a sudden and violent change, from the terrors of an affrighted mind, and from the deep and piercing sorrows of a more solemn repentance. Whereas those who have lived wickedly before must look to meet with a great deal more trouble, because they are put upon changing the whole course of their life at once, and must contend with inveterate habits, and offer no small violence to themselves in plucking up those vices which have been rooted in them by long custom and continuance. This indeed is grievous and must needs be sensibly painful, like the *plucking out of a right eye*, or the *cutting off a right hand*: For in this case a man must strive against the very bent and inclination of his strongest appetites, against the tyranny of custom and the mighty power of a second nature. But this is no just reflection upon religion, because this does not proceed from the nature of God's laws, but from an accidental indisposition in our selves, which Religion is apt to remove: And if we will but allow some time of trouble and uneasiness for the cure, when that is once wrought the commands of God will be more easy and delightful to us than ever our sins and lusts were.

III. Nor does this exclude our after-care and diligence. For when the *Apostle* says that *the commandments of God are not grievous*, he does by no means intend to insinuate that they are calculated for slothful and lazy persons, that they are so easy as to require no industry and endeavour on our part; he only aims to prevent a tacit objection which lies at the bottom of many mens hearts, as if Religion were a most grievous and intolerable burthen, and there were more trouble and less pleasure in it than in any other action of human life. This he utterly denies, but does not hereby intend to exclude such diligence and industry as men use about other matters. And if I should tell you, that the business of Religion does not require a very vigorous prosecution and great earnestness of endeavour, I shall speak quite besides the holy *Scriptures*, which so frequently command *seeking and striving and labouring*, besides many other such phrases that import

port diligence and earnestness. And indeed it were unfit that so excellent and glorious a reward as the *Gospel* promises should stoop down like fruit upon a full-laden bough to be pluck'd by every idle and wanton hand ; that Heaven should be prostituted to the lazy desires and faint wishes, to the cheap and ordinary endeavours of slothful men. God will not so much disparage eternal life and happiness, as to bestow it upon those who have conceived so low an opinion of it as not to think it worth the labouring for. And surely this is sufficient to recommend Religion to any considerate man, if the advantages of it be much greater than of any worldly design that we can propound to our selves, and the difficulties of it not greater. If the same seriousness and industry of endeavour, which men commonly use to raise a fortune and advance themselves in the world, will serve to make a man a good man and to bring him to Heaven, what reason hath any man to complain of the hard terms of Religion? And I think I may truly say that usually less than this does it. For God considers our condition in this world and the pressing necessities of this life, that we are flesh as well as spirit, and that we have great need of these things, and therefore he allows us to be very sedulous and industrious about them. However this I am sure of, that if men would be as serious to save their immortal souls as they are to support these dying bodies ; if they would but provide for eternity with the same solicitude and real care as they do for this life ; if they would but seek Heaven with the same ardor of affection, and vigor of prosecution as they seek earthly things ; if they would but love God as much as many men do the World, and mind godliness as much as men usually do gain ; if they would but go to Church with as good a will as men ordinarily do to their Markets and Fairs, and be in as good earnest at their devotions as men commonly are in driving a bargain ; if they would but endure some troubles and inconveniences in the ways of Religion with the same patience and constancy as they can do storms, and foul ways and mischances, when they are travelling about their worldly occasions ; If they would but avoid bad company as men use to do cheaters, and reject the temptations of the Devil and the world as they would do the kind words and insinuations of a man whom they verily believe to have a design to over-reach them ; I am confident that such a one could not fail of Heaven, and would be much surer of it upon these terms, than any man that doth all the other things could be of getting an estate, or of attaining any thing in this world.

And cannot every man do thus much? All that I have said signifies no more but that men should use their sincere endeavours : And this surely every man can do. For to use our sincere endeavours is nothing else but to do as much as we can, and it is nonsense for any man to deny that he can do as much as he can. And if we would do thus much we are sure of God's grace and assistance, which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men. But men expect that Religion should cost them no pains, that happiness should drop into their laps without any design and endeavour on their part, and that after they have done what they please while they live God should snatch them up to Heaven when they die. But tho' *the commandments of God be not grievous*, yet it is fit to let men know that they are not thus easy.

IV. All the difficulties of Religion are very much allay'd and sweeten'd by *hope* and *love*. By the *hopes* of a mighty reward ; so great as is enough to raise us above our selves, and to make us break through all difficulties and discouragements. And by the *love* of God, who hath taken all imaginable

nable ways to endear himself to us. He gave us our beings, and when we were fallen from that happiness to which at first we were design'd, he was pleas'd to restore us to a new capacity of it by sending his only Son into the world to dye for us. So that if we have any sense of kindness we cannot but love Him who hath done so much to oblige us, and if we love him entirely nothing that he commands will be grievous to us; nay, so far from that, that the greatest pleasure we are capable of will be to please him. For nothing is difficult to love. It will make a man deny himself and cross his own inclinations to pleasure them whom he loves. It is a passion of a strange power where it reigns, and will cause a man to submit to those things with delight which in other circumstances would seem grievous to him. *Jacob serv'd for Rachel seven years, and after that seven years more; and they seem'd unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Did but the love of God rule in our hearts, and had we as real an affection for him as some men have for their friends, there are no such difficulties in Religion but what love would conquer, and the severest parts of it would become easy when they were once undertaken by a willing mind.

V. There is incomparably more trouble in the ways of sin and vice than in those of Religion and Virtue. Every notorious sin is naturally attended with some inconvenience of harm, or danger, or disgrace; which the sinner seldom considers till the sin be committed, and then he is in a labyrinth, and in seeking the way out of a present inconvenience he entangles himself in more. He is glad to make use of indirect arts, and laborious crafts, to avoid the consequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one sin with another, and the more he strives to disentangle himself the more is he *snar'd in the work of his own hands.* Into what perplexities did *David's* sin bring him? such as by all his power and arts he could not free himself from: He was glad to commit a greater crime to avoid the shame of a less, and could find no other way to conceal his adultery but by plunging himself into the guilt of murder. And thus it is proportionably in all other vices. The ways of sin are *crooked paths*, full of windings and turnings; but *the way of holiness* and virtue is a *high-way*, and lies so plain before us that *way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* There needs no skill to keep a man's self true and honest; if we will but resolve to deal justly and to *speake the truth to our neighbour*, nothing in the whole world is easier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required to enable a man to speak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withal himself.

And as the ways of sin are full of intricacy and perplexities, so likewise of trouble and disquiet. There is no man that wilfully commits any sin but his conscience smites him for it, and his guilty mind is frequently gall'd with the remembrance of it, but the reflection upon honest and virtuous actions hath nothing of regret and disquiet in it. No man's conscience ever troubled him for not being dishonest, no man's reason ever challeng'd him for not being drunk, no man ever broke his sleep or was haunted with fears of divine vengeance because he was conscious to himself that he had *liv'd soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world.* But with the ungodly it is not so. There is no man that is knowingly wicked but he is guilty to himself, and there is no man that carries guilt about him but he hath received a sting into his Soul which makes him restless, so that he can never have any perfect ease and pleasure in his mind.

I might have descended to particular Instances, and have shewn how much more troublesome the practice of every sin and vice is than the exercise of the contrary grace and virtue; but that would be too large a Subject to be brought within the limits of a single discourse. VI. Let

VI. Let but virtue and vice, a religious and wicked course of life be put in equal circumstances, do but suppose a man to be as much accustom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, and then I doubt not but the advantages of ease and pleasure will be found to be on the side of Religion: And if we do not put the case thus we make an unequal comparison. For there is no man but when he first begins a wicked course feels a great deal of regret in his mind, the terrors of his conscience and the fears of damnation are very troublesome to him. It is possible that by degrees a man may harden his conscience, and by a long custom of sinning may in a great measure wear off that tender sense of good and evil which makes sin so uneasy: But then if in the practice of a holy life a man may by the same degrees arrive to far greater peace and tranquility of mind than ever any wicked man found in a sinful course, if by custom virtue will come to be more pleasant than ever vice was, then the advantage is plainly on the side of Religion. And this is truly the case. It is troublesome at first for a man to begin any new course, and to do contrary to what he hath been accustom'd to; but let a man but habituate himself to a religious and virtuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees, and unspeakable pleasure succeed in the room of it. It is an excellent rule which Pythagoras gave to his Scholars, *optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam consuetudo faciet jucundissimum*; pitch upon the best course of life, resolve always to do that which is most reasonable and virtuous, and custom will soon render it the most easy. There is nothing of difficulty in a good life but what may be conquer'd by custom as well as the difficulties of any other course, and when a man is once us'd to it the pleasure of it will be greater than of any other course.

Let no man then decline or forsake Religion for the pretended difficulties of it, and lay aside all cares of God's commandments upon this suggestion that they are impossible to be kept. For you see they are not only possible but easy. And those who upon pretence of the trouble and difficulties of Religion abandon themselves to a wicked course of life may easily be convinc'd that they take more pains to make themselves miserable than would serve to bring them to happiness. There is no man that is a servant of sin, and a slave to any base lust, but might if he pleas'd get to Heaven with less trouble than he goes to hell.

So that upon consideration of the whole matter, there is no reason why any man should be deterr'd from a holy and virtuous life for fear of the labour and pains of it. Because every one that is wicked takes more pains in another way, and is more industrious only to a worse purpose. Now he that can travel in deep and foul ways ought not to say that he cannot walk in fair. He that ventures to run upon a precipice when every step he takes is with danger of his life and his soul, ought not to pretend any thing against the plain and safe paths of Religion, which will entertain us with pleasure all along in the way, and crown us with happiness at the end.

S E R M O N VII.

Of the Obligation of Christians to a Holy Life;

2 T I M. II. 19.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

THE whole verse runs thus: *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

In which words the Apostle declares to us the terms of the covenant between God and man. For the word *ῥημάτιον* which is here translated *foundation*, according to the usual signification of it, is likewise (as learned men have observ'd) sometimes used for an instrument of contract whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other. And this notion of the word agrees very well with what follows concerning the *seal* affix'd to it, which is very suitable to a *Covenant* but not at all to a *foundation*. 'Tis true indeed, as the learned *Grotius* hath observ'd there used anciently to be inscriptions on foundation-stones, and the word *σφραγίς* which we render *seal* may likewise signify an *inscription*; and then the sense will be very current thus, *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this inscription*. But it is to be considered, that though *σφραγίς* may signify an *inscription*, yet it is only an *inscription* upon a *seal*, which hath no relation to a foundation, but is very proper to a covenant or mutual obligation. And accordingly the *seal* affix'd to this *instrument*, or covenant between God and man is in allusion to the custom of those countries said to have an inscription on both sides agreeable to the condition of the persons contracting. On God's part there is this *impress* or inscription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, God will own and reward those that are faithful to him: And on our part, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, that is, that calls himself a Christian. For to name the name of any one or to have his name call'd upon by us does according to the use of this Phrase among the *Hebrews*, signify nothing else but to be denominat'd from him. Thus 'tis frequently used in the *Old Testament*, and sometimes in the *New*, *Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* that is, the name or title of Christians; and that expression, *if ye be reproached for the name of Christ*, is at the sixteenth verse varied, *if any man suffer as a Christian*. So that to name the name of Christ is to call our selves Christians.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The word *ἀδικία* is often taken strictly for injustice or unrighteousness, but sometimes used more largely for sin and wickedness in the general. And so it seems to be used here in the Text, because there is no reason from the con-

text

text to restrain it to any particular kind of sin or vice; and because Christianity lays an equal obligation upon men to abstain from all sin. *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*, that is, every Christian obligeth himself by his profession to renounce all sin and to live a holy life. In speaking to this argument I shall do these two things.

1. Shew what obligation the profession of Christianity lays upon men to live holy lives.

2. Endeavour to perswade those who call themselves Christians to answer this obligation.

I. What obligation the profession of Christianity lays upon men to live holy lives. He that calls himself a Christian professeth to entertain the Doctrine of Christ, to live in the imitation of his holy example, and to have solemnly engaged himself to all this. I shall speak briefly to these, and then come to that which I principally intend, to perswade men to live accordingly.

1. He that professeth himself a Christian professeth to entertain the doctrine of Christ, to believe the whole Gospel, to assent to all the articles of the Christian Faith, to all the precepts and promises and threatnings of the Gospel. Now the great design, the proper intention of this doctrine is to take men off from sin, and to direct and encourage them to a holy life. It teacheth us what we are to believe concerning God and Christ, not with any design to entertain our minds with the bare speculation of those truths but to better our Lives. For every article of our faith is a proper argument against sin, and a powerful motive to obedience. The whole history of Christ's appearance in the world, all the discourses and actions of his life, and the sufferings of his death do all tend to this; the ultimate issue of all is the *destroying of sin*; so St. John tells us, *for this purpose was the Son of God manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.* ^{1 John 3. 8.} But this is most expressly and fully declar'd to us, *Tit. 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. The Grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

The precepts of the Gospel do strictly command holiness, and that universal; the purity of our Souls, and the chastity of our bodies; *to cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; to abstain from all kind of evil; to be holy in all manner of conversation.* ^{2 Cor. 7. 1. 1 Thes. 5. 22. 1 Pet. 1. 15.} They require us to endeavour after the highest degrees of holiness that are attainable by us in this imperfect state, *to be holy as he that hath called us is holy; to be perfect as our father which is in heaven is perfect.* ^{Mat. 5. 48.}

And all the promises of the Gospel are so many encouragements to obedience and a holy live; *having therefore these promises, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.* ^{2 Cor. 7. 1.} We are told by St. Peter that these exceeding great and precious promises are given to us that by these we might be partakers of a Divine nature, ^{2 Pet. 1. 4.} *having escaped the pollution that is in the world through lust; and that we might give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance and patience and brotherly kindness and charity.*

And the *threatnings* of the Gospel are so many powerful arguments against sin.

Rom. i.
16, 18.

Therefore the Apostle calls the *Gospel the power of God unto salvation*, because therein the *wrath of God is reveal'd from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. So that if we call our selves Christians we profess to embrace the holy doctrine of the Christian Religion which is perfectly opposite to all impiety and wickedness of life. We profess to be governed by those laws which do strictly enjoin holiness and virtue. We profess to be persuaded that all the promises and threatnings of the Gospel are true, which offer such great and glorious rewards to obedience, and threaten transgression and disobedience with such dreadful punishments. And if so, we are obliged both by our reason and our interest to live accordingly.

2. He that professeth himself a Christian professeth to live in the imitation of Christ's example and to follow his steps *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. The Son of God came into the World not only by his Doctrine to instruct us in the way to happiness, and by his death to make expiation of Sin, but by his life to be an example to us of holiness and virtue. Therefore in Scripture we find several *Titles* given him which import his exemplariness, as of a *Prince* and a *Captain*, a *Master* and a *Guide*. Now if he be our pattern we should endeavour to be like him, *to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus; to walk in love as he also hath loved us and given himself for us*. We should aspire after the highest degree of holiness, make it our constant and sincere endeavour to please God and do his will and *to fulfil all righteousness as he did*. Does any man profess himself a Christian, and yet abandons himself to intemperance and filthy lusts? is this like our Saviour? Are we cruel and unmerciful? is this like the High-Priest of our profession? Are we proud and passionate, malicious and revengeful? is this to be like-minded with Christ who was meek and lowly in Spirit, who prayed for his enemies and offer'd up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it? If we call our selves Christians we profess to have the life of Christ continually before us, and to be always correcting and reforming our lives by that pattern.

Rom. 6. 2,
3, 4, 5, 6.

3. He that calls himself a Christian hath solemnly engaged himself to renounce all sin and to live a holy life. By Baptism we have solemnly taken upon us the profession of Christianity, and engaged our selves to renounce the Devil and all his works, and obediently to keep God's commandments. Anciently those who were baptized put off their garments, which signified the putting off the body of sin; and were immers'd and buried in the water, to represent their death of sin; and then did rise up again out of the water, to signify their entrance upon a new life. And to these customs the Apostle alludes when he says, *How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein; Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life: For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroy'd, that henceforth we should not serve sin*. So that by Baptism we profess to be enter'd into a new state, and to be endued with a new nature; *to have put off the old man with his deeds; to have quitted our former conversation, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and to have put on the new man which after God is created*

in righteousness and true holiness. And therefore Baptism is called the putting on of Christ; As many of you as have been baptiz'd into Christ, have put on Christ. Now if we profess to have put on Christ we must quit and renounce our lusts, because these are inconsistent, as appears by the opposition which the Apostle makes between them; *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Gal. 3. 27. Rom. 13. 14.

And as we did solemnly covenant with God to this purpose in Baptism, so we do solemnly renew this obligation so often as we receive the blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. Therefore the cup in the Sacrament is called the *new Covenant in his Blood*, that is, this represents the shedding of Christ's blood, by which rite the covenant between God and man is ratified. And as by this God doth confirm his promises to us, so we do oblige our selves to be faithful and obedient to him, *and if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, that is, after we are become Christians, *we account the blood of the Covenant a common thing*, that is, we make nothing of the solemnest rite that ever was used in the world for confirmation of any covenant, the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. And that this was always understood to be the meaning of this holy Sacrament, to renew our Covenant with God, and solemnly to confirm our resolutions of a holy life is very plain from that account which *Pliny* * gives us of the worship of the Christians in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperor; in which he tells him, *that they assembled early in the morning before day, to sing a Hymn to Christ as God; and then (saith he) they do sacramento se obstringere, bind themselves by a sacrament or oath not to rob or steal or commit adultery, not to break their word or falsify their trust, and after they have eaten together they depart home.* Which is plainly an account of the Christians celebrating of the holy Sacrament, which it seems was then look'd upon as an *oath* whereby Christians did solemnly covenant and engage themselves against all wickedness and vice. * Plin. Epist. L. 10. Epist. 97.

Thus you see what obligation the profession of Christianity lays upon us to holiness of life. From all which it is evident that the Gospel requires something on our part. For the Covenant between God and us is a mutual engagement, and as there are *blessings* promised on his part so there are *conditions* to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God we have no title at all to the blessings of this Covenant. The contrary doctrine to this hath been greedily entertained to the vast prejudice of Christianity, as if in this new Covenant of the Gospel God took all upon himself, and required nothing, or as good as nothing, of us, that it would be a disparagement to the freedom of God's grace to think he expects any thing from us. That the Gospel is all promises, and our part is only to believe and embrace them, that is, to be confident that God will perform them if we can but think so, though we do nothing else; which is an easy condition to fools but the hardest in the world to a wise man, who if his salvation depended upon it could never persuade himself to believe that the holy God without any respect at all to his repentance and amendment would bestow upon him forgiveness of sins and eternal life, only because he was confident that God would do so. As if any man could think that it were a thing so highly acceptable to God that men should believe of him that he loves to dispense his grace and mercy upon the most unfit and unreasonable terms. A Covenant does necessarily imply a mutual obligation, and the Scripture plainly tells us what are the terms and conditions of this covenant both on God's part and ours, namely, that he *will be our God and we shall be his people.* But he hath no where said that

though we be not *his people* yet he will be *our God*. The *seal* of this Covenant hath two *inscriptions* upon it; one on God's part, that he will *know them that are his*; and another on our part, that we shall *depart from iniquity*. But if we will not submit to this condition God will not know us, *Mat. 7. 23.* but will bid us depart from him. So our Saviour tells us, *I will say unto them depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not*. If we deal falsely in covenant with God and break loose from all our engagements to him, we release God from all the promises that he hath made to us. If we neglect to perform those conditions upon which he hath suspended the performance of his promises, we discharge the obligation on God's part, and he remains faithful though he deny us that happiness which he promised under those conditions which we have neglected.

II. I come now to the *second* thing propounded, and that is to persuade those who profess Christianity to answer those obligations to a holy life which their Religion lays upon them. We all call our selves Christians, and would be very much offended at any man that should deny us this title. But let us not cheat our selves with an empty and insignificant name, but if we will call our selves Christians let us *fill up* this great title, and make good our profession by a suitable life and practice. And to persuade us hereto, I will urge these three considerations.

1. The indecency of the contrary.
2. The great scandal of it to our blessed Saviour and his holy Religion :
And
3. The infinite danger of it to our own souls.

1. Consider how unbecoming it is for a man to live unsuitably to his profession. If we call our selves Christians we profess to entertain the doctrine of the Gospel, to be taught and instructed by the best master, to be the disciples of the highest and most perfect institution that ever was in the world, to have embraced a Religion which contains the most exact rules for the conduct and government of our lives, which lays down the plainest precepts, sets before us the best patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greatest assistances and encouragements to this purpose. We profess to be furnished with the best arguments to excite us to holiness and virtue, to be awed with the greatest fears and animated with the best hopes of any men in the world.

Now whoever makes such a profession as this obligeth himself to live answerably, to do nothing that shall grossly contradict it. Nothing is more absurd than for a man to act contrary to his profession, to pretend to great matters and perform nothing of what he pretends to. Wise men will not be caught with pretences nor be imposed upon with an empty profession, but they will enquire into our lives and actions, and by these they will make a judgment of us. They cannot see into our hearts nor pry into our understandings to discover what it is that we inwardly believe, they cannot discern those secret and supernatural principles that we pretend to be acted by: But this they can do, they can examine our actions and behold our good or bad works, and try whether our lives be indeed answerable to our profession and do really excel the lives of other men who do not pretend to such great things. There are a great many sagacious persons who will easily find us out, will look under our mask, and see through all our fine pretensions, and will quickly discern the absurdity of telling the world that we believe one thing when we do the contrary. If

If we profess to believe the Christian Religion, we expose our selves to the scorn and contempt of every discerning man if we do not live up to it. With what face can any man continue in the practice of any known sin that professeth to believe the holy doctrine of the Gospel which forbids all sin under the highest and severest penalties? If we did but believe the history of the Gospel as we do any ordinary credible story, and did we but regard the laws of Christianity as we do the laws of the Land; were we but persuaded, that fraud and oppression, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanness, covetousness and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and Religion will bring men to hell as certainly as treason and felony will bring a man under the sentence of the Law: Had we but the same awe and regard for the threatnings and promises of the Gospel that we have for the frowns and smiles of those who are in power and authority, even this would be effectual to keep us from sin. And if the Gospel have not this effect upon us it is an argument that we do not believe it.

'Tis to no purpose to go about to persuade men that we do heartily entertain the doctrine of Christ, *that doctrine* which hath all the characters of piety and justice, of holiness and virtue upon it; which obligeth men to *whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are chaste, whatsoever things are lovely, and of good report*, if we have no regard to these things in our lives. He that would know what a man believes, let him attend rather to what he does than to what he talks. He that leads a wicked life makes a more credible and effectual profession of infidelity than he who in words only denies the Gospel. It is the hardest thing in the world to imagine that *that* man believes Christianity who by ungodliness and worldly lusts does deny and renounce it. If we profess our selves Christians, it may justly be expected from us that we should evidence this by our actions, that we should live at another rate than the Heathens did; that we who worship a holy and just God should not allow our selves the liberty to sin as those did who worshipped such Gods as were examples of sin and patrons of their vices. Thou who professest thy self a Christian may'st not walk in the lusts of the flesh and of uncleanness as those were who worshipped a lustful *Jupiter* and a wanton *Venus*. Thou may'st not be intemperate as those were who worshipped a drunken *Bacchus*. Thou may'st not be cruel and unmerciful as those were who worshipped a fierce *Saturn*: Nor may'st thou steal as those did who worshipped a thievish *Mercury*. Thou must remember that thou art a Christian, and when thou art ready to debase thy self to any vile lust consider what title thou bearest, by what name thou art called, whose disciple thou art; and then say to thy self, shall I allow my self in any impiety or wickedness of life who pretend to be instructed by that grace of God which teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? Shall I cherish any sinful passion who pretend to have mortified all these and to have *put off the old man with his deeds*?

It is not being gilded over with the external profession of Christianity that will avail us, our Religion must be a vital principle inwardly to change and transform us. What the Apostle says concerning Circumcision we may apply to them that are baptized and make an outward profession of Christianity; Baptism verily profiteth if we obey the Gospel, but if we walk contrary to the precepts of it our Baptism is no Baptism, and our Christianity is Heathenism. If by our lives and actions

Rom. 2.
25.

ons we do contradict that Religion which we profess, we do by this very thing prove our selves to be counterfeits and hypocrites ; and that we have only taken up our Religion for a fashion, and received it according to custom ; we were born in a Country where it is revered, and therefore we are of it. And the Reason why we are Christians rather than Jews, or Turks, or Heathens, is because Christian Religion had the fortune to come first in our way and to bespeak us at our entrance into the world.

Are we not ashamed to take up a profession upon such slight grounds, and to wear about us such an empty title ? It should make our blood to rise in our faces to consider what a distance there is between our Religion and our lives. I remember *Tully* upbraids the Philosophers very smartly for living unsuitably to their Doctrines. A Philosopher (saith he) is unpardonable if he miscarry in his life, *quod in officio cujus magister esse vult, labitur ; artemque vitæ professus, delinquit in vita ;* because he is faulty in that wherein he pretends to be a master, and whilst he professeth an Art of living better than other men he miscarries in this life. With how much greater reason may we challenge Christians for the miscarriages of their lives, which are so directly contrary to their profession ? It may justly be expected that so perfect an Institution as the Gospel is, which the Son of God came from Heaven on purpose to propagate in the world, should make men more strictly holy and virtuous, and set the professors of it at a greater distance from all impurity and vice than ever any Institution in the world did. If a man profess any other Art or Calling it is expected that he should be skill'd in it, and excel those who do not pretend to it. 'Tis the greatest disparagement to a Physician that can be, to say of him, that he is in other respects an excellent man only he hath no great skill in diseases, and the methods of cure, because this is his Profession : He might be pardon'd for other defects, but the proper skill of his Art may justly be expected from him. So for a Christian ; to say of him, the worst thing in him is his life ; he is very orthodox in his opinions, but he's an ill-natur'd man, one of very violent passions, he will be very frequently drunk, he makes no conscience of his dealings, he is very uncharitable to all that differ from him : This man is faulty in his profession, he is defective in that which should be his excellency ; he may have orthodox opinions in Religion, but when all is done there is no such error and heresy, nothing so fundamentally opposite to Religion as a wicked life. A Christian does not pretend to have a better wit or a more piercing understanding than a Turk or Heathen, but he professeth to live better than they, to be more chaste and more temperate, more just and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men : If he fail in this, where is the Art the man boasts of ? to what purpose is all this noise and stir about the Gospel and the holy Doctrine of Christ ? If any man profess himself a Christian and do not live better than others he is a mere pretender and *Mountebank* in Religion, he's a bungler in his own Art and unskill'd in his proper profession. This is the first, the indecency of the thing.

2. Consider how great a scandal this must needs be to our blessed Saviour and his holy Religion. The Christian Religion hath undergone many a hard censure for the miscarriages of the professors of it. The impieties and vices of those who call themselves Christians have

have caused many sharp reflections upon Christianity, and made the Son of God and the Blessed Saviour of the world to wear the odious names of deceiver and impostor. If a man did design to do the greatest spight to Religion he could not give it a deeper wound, he could not take a more effectual course to disparage it than by a lewd and debauch'd life. For this will still be an objection in the minds of those who are strangers and enemies to our Religion. If the Gospel were so excellent an institution as it is reported to be, surely we should see better effects of it in the lives of those who profess it. When we would persuade a Heathen to our Religion, and tell him how holy a God we serve, what excellent patterns we imitate, what spiritual and divine precepts of holiness and virtue our Religion does contain; may not he reply, would you have me to believe you when I see you do not believe your selves? If you believed your Religion you would live according to it. For if the Gospel were every word of it false, if there were neither a Heaven to be hoped for nor a Hell to be feared after this life, how could many Christians live worse than they do?

As we would not proclaim to the world that the Gospel is an unholy and vicious Institution, let us take heed that we bring no scandal upon it by our lives, lest the enemies of our Religion say as *Salvian* tells us they did in his time, *Si Christus Sancta docuisset Christiani sancte vixissent*, surely if Christ had taught so holy a Doctrine Christians would have lived holier lives. *Tully* tells us that one of the shrewdest arguments that ever was brought against Philosophy was this, *quosdam perfectos Philosophos turpiter vivere*, that some great Philosophers led very filthy lives. *Celsus* and *Porphiry*, *Hierocles* and *Julian*, among all their witty invectives against Christian Religion have nothing against it that reflects so much upon it as do the wicked lives of so many Christians. The greatest enmity to Religion is to profess it and to live unanswerably to it.

This consideration ought greatly to affect us. I am sure the Apostle speaks of it with great passion and vehemency, *for many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* Phil. 3. 18. A Jew or a Turk is not so great an enemy to Christianity as a lewd and vicious Christian. Therefore let me beseech Christians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour and the credit of their Religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Christianity. And if there be any who are resolved to continue in a vicious course to the injury and disparagement of Christianity, I could almost intreat of them that they would quit their profession and renounce their Baptism, that they would lay aside their title of Christians and initiate themselves in Heathenish rites and superstitions, or be circumcised for Jews or Turks: For it were really better, upon some accounts, that such men should abandon their Profession, than keep on a vizard which serves to no other purpose but to scare others from Religion.

3. And Lastly, Let us consider the danger we expose our selves to by not living answerably to our Religion. And this, I hope, may prevail upon such as are not moved by the former considerations. Hypocrites are instanc'd in Scripture, as a sort of sinners that shall have the sharpest torments and the fiercest damnation. When our Saviour would set forth the great severity of the Lord towards the evil servant

Matth. 24.
51.

servant he expresseth it thus, *he shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites.* So that the punishment of Hypocrites seems to be made in the measure and standard of the highest punishment. Thou professest to believe in Christ and to hope in him for salvation, but in the mean time thou livest a wicked and unholy life, thou dost not believe but presume on him, and wilt find at the great day that this thy confidence will be thy confusion, and he whom thou hopest will be thy Advocate and Saviour will prove thy Accuser and thy Judge. What our Saviour says to the Jews, *There is one that accuseth you even Moses in whom ye trust,* may very well be applied to false Christians, there is one that accuseth you and will condemn you, even Jesus in whom ye trust.

John 5.
45.

The profession of Christianity and mens having the name of Christ named upon them will be so far from securing them from Hell, that it will sink them the deeper into it. Many are apt to pity the poor Heathens who never heard of the name of Christ, and sadly to condole their case, but as our Saviour said upon another occasion, *Weep not for them, weep for your selves.* There's no such miserable person in the world as a degenerate Christian, because he falls into the greatest misery from the greatest advantages and opportunities of being happy. Dost thou lament the condition of *Socrates*, and *Cato*, and *Aristides*, and doubt what shall become of them at the day of Judgment? and canst thou who art an impious and prophane Christian, think that thou shalt escape the damnation of Hell?

Dost thou believe that the moral Heathen shall be cast out? and canst thou who hast led a wicked life under the profession of Christianity have the impudence to hope that thou shalt sit down with *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God? No, those sins which are committed by Christians under the enjoyment of the Gospel are of deeper dye and cloathed with blacker aggravations than the sins of Heathens are capable of. A Pagan may live without God in the World, and be unjust towards men, at a cheaper rate and upon easier terms than thou who art a Christian. Better had it been thou hadst never known one syllable of the Gospel, never heard of the name of Christ than that having taken it upon thee thou shouldest not depart from iniquity. Happy had it been for thee, that thou hadst been born a *Jew*, or a *Turk*, or a poor *Indian*, rather than that being bred among Christians, and professing thy self of that number, thou shouldst lead a vicious and unholy life.

I have insisted the longer upon these arguments, that I might, if possible, awaken men to a serious consideration of their lives, and persuade them to a real reformation of them; that I may oblige all those who call themselves Christians to live up to the essential and fundamental Laws of our Religion; to love God, and to love our Neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him to do to us, to mortify our lusts, and subdue our passions, and sincerely to endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God.

This indeed would become our profession and be honourable to our Religion, and would remove one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the Gospel. For how can we expect that the Doctrine of God our Saviour should gain any considerable ground in the world, so long as by the unworthy lives of so many Christians 'tis represented to the world at so great disadvantage? If ever we would have Christian Religion effectually

ally recommended, it must be by the holy and unblamable lives of those who make profession of it. Then indeed it would look with so amiable a countenance as to invite many to it, and carry so much majesty and authority in it as to command reverence from its greatest enemies, and make men to acknowledge that God is in us of a truth, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

The good God grant that as we have taken upon us the profession of Christianity, so we may be careful so to live that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that the grace of God which bringeth salvation may teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.

S E R M O N VIII.

Of the Happiness of a Heavenly Conversation.

P H I L. III. 20.

For our Conversation is in Heaven.

FOR the understanding of which words we need to look back no further than the 18th. verse of this Chapter, where the Apostle with great vehemency and passion speaks of some among the *Philippians*, who indeed profess'd Christianity but yet would do any thing to decline suffering for that profession; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Cross of Christ*; they cannot endure to suffer with him and for him, they are so sensual and wedded to this world that they will do any thing to avoid persecution; so he describes them in the next verse, *whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things*. Now in opposition to these sensual and earthly-minded men the Apostle gives us the character of the true Christians, they are such as mind Heaven and another world, and prefer the hopes of that to all the interests of this life, *our conversation is in Heaven*.

Heb. 11.
10.
Heb. 12.
21.
Heb. 14.
14.

For the right understanding of which phrase be pleased to observe that it is an allusion to a City or Corporation, and to the privileges and manners of those who are free of it. And Heaven is several times in Scripture represented to us under this notion of a City. It is said of *Abraham* that *he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*. It is called likewise *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem*. And the same Apostle speaking of the uncertain condition of Christians in this world says of them, *that here they have no continuing City, but look for one that is to come*.

Now to this City the Apostle alludes here in the Text, when he says *our conversation is in Heaven*. For the word *πολίτευμα*, which is rendred *conversation*, may either signify the *privilege* of Citizens, or their *conversation* and manners, or may take in both these.

Acts 22.
28.

In the first sense of the *privilege* of Citizens, we find *πολιτεία* a word of near affinity with this sometimes us'd; *with a great sum* (says the Captain to Paul) *obtain'd I τὴν πολιτείαν παύτῳ, this freedom*. According to this sense, *ἡμῶν το πολιτεῖμα* may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noster, our Citizenship is in Heaven*; an allusion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hammond* observes) to those who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great distance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privilege of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner the Apostle here describes the condition of Christians. 'Tis true, we are born here in this world and live in it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Country and free of that City which is above.

In

In the other sense of the *conversation* of Citizens we find the verb πολιτεύεσθαι used towards the beginning of this *Epistle*, *Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.* And why may not the word πολιτεύεσθαι in the Text, without any inconvenience include both these? as if the Apostle had said, there are some that mind earthly things, and are so addicted to them that rather than part with them they will forsake their Religion; but as for us, we consider that we are Citizens of Heaven, and accordingly we converse and demean our selves in this world as those that are free of another City and do belong to it.

So that to have *our conversation in heaven* does imply these two things.

First, The serious thoughts and considerations of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which those thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

These two things take up the meaning of my Text, and shall be the subject of the following discourse.

I. The serious thoughts and considerations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious state of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themselves to our consideration. *First*, The happiness of this state. *Secondly*, The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happiness.

First, We will consider the happiness of this state. But what, and how great this happiness is, I am not able to represent to you. These things are yet in a great measure within the veil, and it does not now fully appear what we shall be. The Scriptures have reveal'd so much in general concerning the reality and unspeakable felicities of this state as may satisfy us for the present, and serve to inflame our desires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely*, that it is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happiness in this world. It is free from all those sharp and bitter ingredients which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mix'd, and uncertain, and unsatisfying; nay so far are they from giving us satisfaction, that the very sweetest of them are satiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is something of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments, and that causeth vexation of spirit. There is no sensual pleasure but is either purchas'd by some pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great estate is neither to be got without care, nor kept without fear, nor lost without trouble. Dignity and greatness is troublesome almost to all mankind, it is commonly uneasy to them that have it, and it is usually hated and envy'd by those that have it not. Knowledge, that is one of the best and sweetest pleasures of human life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a share of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this also is vexation of spirit; for in much wisdom there is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.*

Eccl. i. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the best of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and sorrow in them; but the happiness of

Rev. 22.
3: 5.

the next life is free from allay and mixture. In the description of the new Jerusalem it is said, that *there shall be no more curse, and there shall be no night there*, nothing to embitter our blessings, or obscure our Glory. Heaven is the proper region of happiness, there only are pure joys and an unmingled felicity.

Prov. XXIII - 5

But the enjoyments of this world as they are mix'd, so they are uncertain. So wavering and inconstant are they that we can have no security of them, when we think our selves to have the fastest hold of them they slip out of our hands we know not how. For this reason Solomon very elegantly calls them things *that are not*, *Why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themselves wings and fly like an Eagle towards heaven*. So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to secure them they may break loose from us, and in an instant vanish out of our sight, *riches make to themselves wings, and fly like an Eagle*, intimating to us that riches are often accessory to their own ruin. Many times the greatness of a man's estate, and nothing else, hath been the cause of the loss of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairness* of some mens fortune hath been a temptation to those who have been more powerful to *ravish* it from them, thus *riches make to themselves wings*. So that he that enjoys the greatest happiness of this world does still want one happiness more, to secure to him for the future what he possesses for the present. But the happiness of Heaven is a steady and constant light, fix'd and unchangeable as the fountain from whence it springs, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning*.

And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unsatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities*, that every thing in this world can trouble us, but nothing can give us satisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are so phantastical, that we can neither be well with these things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneasy. If we be poor we think our selves miserable, and when we come to be rich we commonly really are so. If we are in a low condition we fret and murmur, and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatness we are many times farther from contentment than we were before. So that we pursue the happiness of this world just as little Children chase birds, when we think we are come very near it and have it almost in our hands it flies farther from us than it was at first.

Nay, so far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us satisfaction, that the sweetest of them are most apt to satiate and cloy us. All the pleasures of this world are so contriv'd as to yield us very little happiness. If they go off quickly they signify nothing, and if they stay long we are sick of them. After a full draught of any sensual pleasure we presently loath it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full satisfaction so we shall never be weary of them. Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleasure and contentment. In the felicities of Heaven these two things shall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any sensual delight, long and full enjoyment, and yet a fresh and perpetual pleasure. As in God's presence there is fulness of joy, so at his right hand there shall be pleasures for evermore.

2. The happiness of the other life is not only incomparably beyond any happiness of this world (that, it may be, is no great commendation of it)

it) but it is very great in it self. The happiness of Heaven is usually in Scripture describ'd to us by such pleasures as are manly and excellent, chaste and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than those of sense; and if the Scripture at any time descend to the metaphors of a *feast*, and a *banquet*, and a *marriage*, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakness and condescension to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happiness, so far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us, are the perfection of our knowledge, and the height of our love, and the perpetual society and friendship of all the blessed inhabitants of those glorious mansions; and the joyful concurrence of all these in chearful expressions of gratitude, in the incessant praises and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happiness. And what can be more delightful than to have our understandings entertain'd with a clear sight of the best and most perfect Being, with the knowledge of all his works and of the wise designs of his providence here in the world? than to live in the reviving presence of God, and to be continually attending upon him whose favour is life, and whose glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world than the greatest of them is above the poorest worm? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomon's* Servants happy in having the opportunity by standing continually before him to hear his wisdom; but in the other world it shall be a happiness to *Solomon* himself, and to the wisest and greatest persons that ever were in this world, to stand before this great King to admire his wisdom and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happiness of Heaven to consist in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that blessed sight we shall be infinitely transported, so the Scripture tells us we shall be also transformed into the image of the divine perfections; *we shall see God, and we shall be like him*, and what greater happiness can there be than to be like the happiest and most perfect Being in the world? Besides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life? We need not doubt but that he who is happiness it self, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can easily find out such employments and delights for us in the other world as will be proper and suitable to that state.

But then besides the improvement of our knowledge there shall be the most delightful exercise of love. When we come to heaven we shall enter into the society of the blessed Angels and of *the spirits of just men made perfect*, that is, freed from all those passions and infirmities which do now render the conversation, even of the best men, sometimes troublesome to one another. We shall then meet with all those excellent Persons, those brave Minds, those innocent and charitable Souls whom we have seen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we shall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends, and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we shall then be perfectly reconcil'd notwithstanding all the warm contests and peevish differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters of Religion. For Heaven is a state of perfect love and friendship, there will be nothing but kindness and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment and wise ways of rendering conversation mutually pleasant to one another. And what greater happiness can be imagin'd than to converse freely with so many excellent persons, without any thing of folly or disguise, of jealousy or design upon one another? For then there will be none of those vices and passions, of covetousness and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peevishness, which do now

so much spoil the pleasure and disturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, schisms and divisions will then be effectually hinder'd, not by force but by love, not by compulsion but by that *charity which never fails*; and all those controversies in Religion which are now so hotly agitated will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledge and convincing light.

And when this blessed society is met together, and thus united by love, they shall all join in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath lov'd us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* And they shall sing everlasting songs of praise to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that infinite goodness, and admirable wisdom, and almighty power, which are clearly seen in the creation and government of the world and of all the Creatures in it; particularly for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his merciful providences towards them in this world: But above all for the redemption of their souls by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveness of their sins, for the gracious assistance of his holy Spirit, and for conducting them safely through all the snares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world to the secure possession of that glory and happiness which then they shall be partakers of, and are bound to praise God for to all eternity. This, this shall be the employment of the blessed spirits above, and these are the chief ingredients of our happiness which the Scripture mentions. And if there were no other, as there may be ten thousand more for any thing I can tell, yet generous and virtuous minds will easily understand how great a pleasure there is in the improvement of our knowledge, and the exercise of love; and in a grateful and perpetual acknowledgment of the greatest benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happiness shall be eternal. And though this be but a circumstance and do not enter into the nature of our happiness, yet it is so material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would strangely damp and allay all our joys to think that they should sometime have an end. And the greater our happiness were, the greater trouble it would be to us to consider that it must have a period.

It would make a man sorrowful indeed to think of leaving such vast possessions. Indeed if the happiness of heaven were such as the joys of this world are, it were fit they should be as short; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we should soon grow weary of it. But being so excellent, it would scarce be a happiness if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleasures of heaven, as great as they are, to see to an end of them, though it were at never so great a distance; to consider that all this vast treasure of happiness would one day be exhausted, and that after so many years were past we should be as poor and miserable again as we were once in this world. God hath so order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world should be temporary and transient, but that the great and substantial pleasures of the other world should be as lasting as they are excellent. For Heaven as it is an *exceeding*, so it is an *eternal weight of glory*. And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven and banishes all fear and trouble from the minds of the blessed. And thus to be secur'd in the possession of our happiness is an unspeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal as it shall never determine, so it can never be diminish'd; for

for to be diminish'd and to decay is to draw nearer to an end, and that which shall never have an end can never come nearer to it.

O vast *eternity*! how dost thou swallow up our thoughts and entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and highest pitch of our happiness, upon which we may stand secure and look down with scorn upon all things here below; and how small and inconsiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vast and endless enjoyments of our future state? But oh vain and foolish souls! that are so little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleasures of sin which are but for a season*, can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlasting felicity. Blessed God! why hast thou prepared such a happiness for those who neither consider it, nor seek after it? *Why is such a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make use of it*; who fondly chuse to gratify their lusts rather than to save their souls, and sottishly prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin before a blessed immortality.

4. And lastly, This happiness is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. It is so great, that it cannot now *enter into the heart of man*. We cannot from the experience of any of those pleasures and delights which we have been acquainted withal in this world frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven we shall be ready to say of it as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon's* wisdom and prosperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that state do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can say how great a good God is? and how happy he who is the fountain of happiness can make those souls that love him, and those whom he loves.

In this imperfect state we are not capable of a full representation of those glories. *We cannot now see God and live*. A full description of Heaven and of the pleasures of that state would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too strong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but Children, and we speak as Children, and understand and think as Children* concerning these things; but in the other state we shall grow up *to be men*, and then we shall put away these childish thoughts; *now we know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall be done away: now we see through a glass darkly* (*ἐν αἰνέματι*, in a riddle) *but then we shall see face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known*, as the Apostle discourseth excellently concerning this very matter.

1 Cor. 13:
9, 10, 11.

No sooner shall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds shall be rais'd to a strength and activity as much above that of the most knowing persons in this world as the thoughts of the greatest Philosopher and wisest man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now so well fram'd to understand any thing in this world, as our understandings shall then be fitted for the knowledge of God and of the things that belong to that state. In the mean time let us bless God that he hath reveal'd so much of this happiness to us as is necessary to excite and encourage us to seek after it.

The *Second* thing to be consider'd concerning our future happiness, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in short is by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies of God in our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ indeed is the author of our salvation, but obedience is the condition of it;

so

Heb. 5. 1. so the Apostle tells us, that *Christ is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*. It is the *grace of God* in the Gospel which brings or offers this *salvation* to us, but then it is by the *denying of ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and by *living soberly, and righteously and godly in this present world* that we are to wait for the *blessed hope*. Our Saviour promises this happiness to the pure in heart, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*; and elsewhere the Scripture doth exclude all others from any share or portion in this blessedness, so the Apostle assures us *that without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

Tit. 2. 11,
12.

Heb. 18.
14.

And holiness is not only a condition but a necessary qualification for the happiness of the next life. This is the force of St. John's reasoning, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him*. To see God is to be happy, but unless we be like him we cannot see him. The sight and presence of God himself would be no happiness to that man who is not like to God in the temper and disposition of his mind. And from hence the Apostle infers in the next verse, *every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure*. So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our selves in the practice of any known sin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven and render our selves unfit for eternal life. By this means we defeat all the designs of God's grace and mercy towards us, and salvation it self cannot save us if we make our selves incapable of that happiness which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are sanctified*, and *the inheritance of the Saints in light*; so that it is not enough that this inheritance is promis'd to us, but we must be qualified and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it*.

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future state. Our souls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and disposition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life he shall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects those holy and virtuous dispositions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main state, *he that is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous still*. If we do not in a good degree mortify our lusts and passions here, death will not kill them for us, but we shall carry them with us into the other world. And if God should admit us so qualified into the place of happiness, yet we shall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our sensual inclinations and desires would meet with nothing there that would be suitable to them, and we should be perpetually tormented with those appetites which we brought with us out of this world, because we should find nothing there to gratify them withal. For as the Apostle says in another sense, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. The happiness of heaven consists in such things as a wicked man hath no gust and relish for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in Heaven, he would be just like the rich man in Hell, tormented with a continual thirst, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent desires; and would not be able, amidst all the plenty and treasures of that place, to find so much as one drop of suitable pleasure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewise our fierce and unruly passions; if we should carry them with us into the other world, how inconsistent would they be with happiness? They would not only make us miserable our selves, but be a trouble to all those with whom we should converse. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peevish and passionate temper, were admitted

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ted into the mansions of the blessed, he would not only be unhappy himself, but would disturb the quiet of others; and raise storms even in those calm regions. Vain man! that drest of being happy without any disposition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we desire and to live with those whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven suitable to the desires and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and delights of that state are purely spiritual, and are only to be relish'd by those who have *purified themselves as God is pure*. But if thou be carnal and sensual, what are these things to thee? What happiness would it be to thee to see God, and to have him always in thy view who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company who is of a quite contrary temper and disposition to thy self, whose presence thou darest, and whom whilst thou wast in this world thou couldst never endure to think upon? So that the pleasures of Heaven it self could signify no good or happiness to that man who is not so dispos'd as to take pleasure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt souls to live and breath in, and the whole employment and conversation of that place, as it would be unsuitable, so would it also be unacceptable to a sensual and vicious person.

From all this it appears how necessary it is for us to prepare our selves for this blessed state, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every lust and inordinate passion in our souls. For till this be done we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *first* thing imply'd in this phrase of *having our conversation in heaven*, viz. the serious thoughts and considerations of heaven; or the happiness of that state, and of the way and means whereby that happiness is to be attain'd.

II. The *having our conversation in heaven* does imply likewise the effect which those considerations ought to have upon our hearts and lives:
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1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpose made this world troublesome and uneasy to us, that there might be no sufficient temptation to reasonable and considerate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happiness; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world that might pretend to our affection or court us with any advantage in comparison of everlasting life and glory.

When we come to die and eternity shall present it self to our serious and waking thoughts, then things will put on another face, and those things which we valued so much in this life will then appear to be nothing worth; but those things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would consider these things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be satisfied of the vanity of this world before we despair'd of the happiness of the other.

2. To make us very active and industrious to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that so we may be qualified and dispos'd for the happiness of the next. Men are usually very industrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world: Did we but value heaven half as much as it deserves we should take infinitely more pains
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for that. So often as we consider the glories that are above, how does it accuse our sloth and condemn our folly that we are less concerned for our souls than most men are for their bodies, that we will not labour half so much for an eternal inheritance as men ordinarily do for these corruptible things?

Let us remember that we are hastling apace to another world, and that our eternal happiness now lies at the stake. And how should it quicken our endeavours to have such a reward set before us, to have Crowns and Scepters in our eyes? would we but often represent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervors should we feel in our hearts? we should be all life, and spirit, and wing; and should do God's will, almost with the same readiness and delight, as the *Angels* do *who continually behold the face of their Father*. The consideration of heaven and the firm persuasion of our future happiness should actuate all the powers of our souls, and be continually inspiring us with new vigor in the ways of holiness and virtue. How should this thought swell our resolutions and confirm our purposes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holiness* our *end will be everlasting life*?

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and afflictions of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be, provided we be sure that it leads to happiness. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wise and considerate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture Rom. 8.18 tells us that there is no comparison between them. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*. The evils of this life afflict men more or less according as the soul is fortified with considerations proper to support us under them. When we consider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Country where we shall meet with all the delights we can desire, it ought not to trouble us much to endure storms and foul ways, and to want many of those accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we must take things as we find them and not look to have every thing just to our mind. These difficulties and inconveniences will shortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are safely landed in our own Countrey, with what pleasure shall we look back upon those rough and boisterous Seas which we have escap'd? The more troubles we have past through the kinder usage we shall find when we come to our Father's house. So the Apostle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. When we come to heaven our happiness shall then be as real as our miseries were here upon earth, and far greater and more lasting. And what great matter is it tho' we suffer a while in this world, provided we escape the endless unsufferable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reserv'd for us, and we shall receive them with interest in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be unsufferable indeed, if there were nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, Christians would not only be of all men but of all creatures *the most miserable*. But our Religion hath abundantly assur'd us to the contrary. And the assurance of this was that which made the primitive Christians to embrace sufferings with so much cheerfulness, to glory in

in tribulation, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance. The seven brethren in the History of the Maccabees upon this persuasion would *not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.* That storm of stones which was pour'd upon St. Stephen was no more to him than a common shower when *he saw the heavens open'd, and Jesus (in whose cause he suffer'd) standing on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us sincere in all our professions, words and actions. Did men firmly believe the rewards of another world their Religion would not be only in shew and pretence, but in life and reality, no man would put on a *form of godliness* that were destitute of *the power of it*; we should do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God and our own Consciences; and be as curious of our thoughts, and most retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theatre and in the presence of the greatest assembly. For in the next life men shall not be rewarded for what they seem'd to be, but for what they really were in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or speak, or do, we should always remember that the day of revelation is coming, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclos'd, when all disguises shall be laid aside, and every one's mask shall be taken off, and all our actions and designs shall be brought upon the publick stage and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing now hidden which shall not then be reveal'd, nor secret which shall not be made known.*

5. To arm us against the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terror of it is infinitely increas'd by the fearful apprehensions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a blessed immortality do strangely relieve the fainting spirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great measure to take away the terror of it. I know that the thoughts of death are dismal even to good men, and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement than when we are conflicting with this last Enemy, and there is no such comfortable consideration to a dying man as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that looks upon death only as a passage to glory, may welcome the messengers of it as bringing him the best and most joyful news that ever came to him in his whole life; and no man can stay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things implied in this phrase, of *having our conversation in heaven, viz.* the serious thoughts and considerations of heaven, and the effect of these thoughts and considerations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make some reflection upon what hath been deliver'd concerning the happiness of good men after this life. I have told you that it is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world, that it is great in it self, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now after all this, I am very sensible how much all that I have said comes short of the greatness and dignity of the thing. So that I could almost begin again and make a new attempt upon this subject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from so delightful an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon these considerations. We are unworthy of heaven, and unfit to partake of so great a glory, if we cannot take pleasure in the contemplation of those things now, the possession whereof shall be our happiness for ever.

With what joy then should we think of those *great and glorious things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in the heavens*? How should we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour when we shall make our escape out of these prisons, when we shall pass out of *this howling wilderness* into the *promis'd Land*; when we shall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natur'd world; when we shall be past all storms, and secur'd from all further danger of shipwreck, and shall be safely landed in the regions of bliss and immortality?

O blessed time! *When all tears shall be wip'd from our eyes, and death and sorrow shall be no more*; When mortality shall be *swallowed up of life*, and we shall enter upon the possession of all that happiness and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have rais'd us to the expectation of; when we shall be eas'd of all our pains, and resolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our sins, and be freed from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all the happiness secur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we shall know God and other things without study, and love him and one another without measure, and serve and praise him without weariness, and obey his will without the least reluctancy; and shall still be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praising, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How should these thoughts affect our hearts, and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great disadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that those things are at a great distance from us, and not sensible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us so strongly, and to work so powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this disadvantage we should often revive these considerations upon our mind, and inculcate upon our selves the reality and certainty of these things together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We should reason thus with our selves; If good men shall be so unspeakably happy, and consequently wicked men so extremely miserable in another world: If these things be true and will one day be found to be so, why should they not be to me as if they were already present? why should not I be as much afraid to commit any sin as if hell were naked before me, and I saw the astonishing miseries of the damned? and why should I not be as careful to serve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven were open to my view, and I saw *Jesus* standing at the right hand of God with crowns of glory in his hand ready to be set upon the heads of all those who continue faithful to him?

The lively apprehensions of the nearness of death and eternity are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think our selves prepar'd for our future state to transport us with joy, or to amaze us with horror. For the soul that is fully satisfied of his future bliss is already entred into heaven, has begun to take possession of glory, and has (as it were) his blessed Saviour in his arms, and may say with old *Simeon*, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. But the thoughts of death must needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtful or despairing of his future condition. It would daunt the stoutest man that ever breathed, to look upon death when he can see nothing but hell beyond it. When the

the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *To morrow thou and thy Sons shall be with me*, these words struck him to the heart, so that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more strength left in him*. It is as certain that we shall dye as if an exprefs messenger should come to every one of us from the other world and tell us so. Why should we not then always live as those that must die, and as those that hope to be happy after death? To have these apprehensions vigorous and lively upon our minds, this is *to have our conversation in heaven*, from whence also we look for a Saviour, *the Lord Jesus Christ*, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IX.

Of the End of Judgments, and the Reason of their Continuance.

I S A. XIX. 12, 13.

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.

IN the former part of this 12th verse, the Prophet threatens that *Israel* should be brought into great distress and set upon by Enemies on every side, *the Syrians before and the Philistines behind*, and that they should devour *Israel with open mouth*: And though this was like to be a very sore and dreadful judgment, yet he foretels that this would not stay God's hand nor satisfy his anger, because he foresaw that they would still grow worse and continue impenitent. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still: For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

In which words there are these two things very useful at all times, but at this time especially most proper and seasonable for our consideration.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a People*; and that is *to reclaim them from their sins*, implied in these words, *For the People turneth not to him that smiteth them*; which intimate to us that this is the end which God aims at in his Judgments to take us off from our sins and to bring us to himself.

2. The reason of the continuance of God's Judgments, because the People were not reclaim'd by them. And this is fully express'd in the *Text*, that therefore *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, because the People turneth not unto him that smiteth them, &c.*

Of these Two I crave leave to speak, as plainly and briefly as I can.

1. *The design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a people*; and that is *to reclaim them from their sins*. This indeed is the intention of all God's dispensations towards us in this world. The end of all his mercies and benefits is to take us off from sin, and to oblige and win us to our duty: So the *Apostle* tells us, *Rom. 2. 4.* That the design of God's goodness and long-suffering and forbearance towards us, is, *to lead us to repentance.*

And this is the way wherein God delights to deal with us. The way of Judgment and severity is that which he is more averse from, a course which he unwillingly takes with us and not without some difficulty and reluctance. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*: and were it not that we are such perverse Creatures as not to be wrought upon by kindness, so wild as not to be tamed by gentle usage, God would not handle us in any

any other way. It is our obstinacy and intractableness to the methods of his goodness which constraineth, and almost forceth him against his inclination, to take the Rod into his hand, and to chastise us with it. He would draw us with *the cords of Love* and *the bands of a man*, (as he expresseth himself in the *Prophet*) but we will not follow him: And therefore we provoke him to turn these cords into whips, and to change the gentle methods of his kindness into ways of harshness and severity.

And yet when he comes to take this course with us, he still like a kind and tender-hearted Father aims at our benefit and advantage. He designs kindness to the sons of men by all those Judgments which do not kill them and cut them off from the opportunity and possibility of improving them. If he sends evils upon us, it is that thereby he may do us some greater good: If he afflicts us, it is not because it is pleasant to him to deal harshly with us, but because it is profitable and necessary for us to be so dealt with: And if at any time he embitter our lives by miseries and sufferings, it is because he is loath to see us perish in pleasant ways, and chuseth rather to be somewhat severe towards us than suffer us to be utterly undone.

This *Moses* declares to have been the great end of all the severe Providences of God towards the People of *Israel* in their long wandering in the Wilderness, and all the difficulties and hardships they were there exercised withal for the space of forty years, *Deut. 8. 15, 16. Who led thee through that great and terrible Wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions, &c. That he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.*

So that the afflicting providences of God are not only apt in their own nature to do us good, but which is a more express argument of the Divine goodness, God intends and aims at this end by them: He does not send Judgments upon this Theatre of the World for his sport and pastime, nor set on one part of his Creation to bait another for his own diversion: He does not, like some of the cruel *Roman* Emperors, take pleasure to exercise men with dangers and to see them play bloody prizes before him.

Nay he does nothing that is severe out of humour and passion; as our earthly Parents many times do. Indeed he is angry with us for our sins, but yet so as still to pity our persons: And when his Providence makes use of any sharp and cutting instruments, it is with this merciful design, to let out our corruption; If he cast us into the Furnace of affliction, it is that he may refine and purify us from our dross.

So that though the Judgments of God be Evils in themselves, yet considering the intentions of God in them they are no real objections against his goodness, but rather arguments for it; as will appear if we consider these *three* things,

1. That the Judgments of God are proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind.
2. They are proper for the prevention of far greater Evils of the same kind.
3. They are not only proper to these Ends but in many cases very necessary.

First, *The Judgments of God are very proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind; I mean the Evil of Sin.* We take wrong measures of things, when we judge those to be the greatest evils which afflict our bodies, wound our reputation, and impoverish our Estates. For those certainly are far the greatest, which affect our noblest part; which vitiate our understandings, and deprave our wills, and wound and defile our souls,
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What corrupt humours are to the body, that sin is to the souls of men, their disease and their death.

Now it is very agreeable with the goodness and mercy of the Divine Providence, to administer to us whatever is proper for the cure of so great an evil. If we make our selves sick, that is our own folly, and no fault of the Physician; but we are beholden to him if he recover us, though it be by very bitter and unpleasing means. All temporal Judgments which are short of Death, are properly Medicinal; and if we will but suffer them to have their kindly operation upon us, they will work a cure; and how grievous and distasteful soever they may be for the present, they will prove mercies and blessings in the issue. Upon this account *David* reckons afflictions among the happy blessings of his life, *Psal.* 119. 72. *It is good for me (says he) that I have been afflicted;* And he gives the reason of it in the same *Psal.* ver. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learnt thy precepts.*

So that though all afflictions are Evils in themselves, yet they are good for us, because they discover to us our disease and tend to our cure. They are a sensible argument and conviction to us of the evil and danger of sin. We are commonly such fools as *Solomon* speaks of, who make a mock of sin; And like Children will be playing with the edge of it till it cut and wound us: We are not sufficiently sensible how great an evil it is till we come to feel the dismal effects and consequences of it. And therefore to rectify our apprehensions concerning it God makes us to suffer by it. Thus *Elihu* describes to us the happy effect of afflictions upon sinners, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. *If they be bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction, then God sheweth them their work and their transgression that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* God doth but invite and intreat us by his mercies, but his Judgments have a more powerful and commanding voice. *When he holds men in cords of affliction, then he openeth their ear to discipline.* In prosperity we are many times incapable of counsel and instruction: but when we are under God's correcting hand then are we fit to be spoken withal.

Secondly. The Judgments of God are likewise proper for the preventing of far greater evils of the same kind; I mean farther punishments. In sending of temporal Judgments upon Sinners, God usually proceeds with them by degrees. First he lets fly several single shots at them, and if upon these they will take warning and come in they may prevent the broad-sides and volleys of his wrath.

But the great advantage of all is, that temporal Judgments may prove to us the opportunities of preventing the miserable and unspeakable torments of a long Eternity. For all Judgments which are not final, leaving men a space of Repentance, have in them the mercy of a Reprieve, which by a serious and timely return to God may be improv'd into a Pardon.

Besides, that adversity and afflictions do usually dispose men, and put them into a fit temper for Repentance; They fix our minds and make us serious, and are apt to awaken us to consideration, and suggest to us such thoughts and meditations as these: If temporal evils be so grievous, how insupportable then will be the extream and endless torments of the next life? If in this day of God's grace and patience we sometimes meet with such severity, what may we not look for in the day of vengeance? If these drops of God's wrath which now and then fall upon sinners in this world, fill them with so much anguish and affliction, how deplorably miserable will those wretches be upon whom the storms of his fury shall fall? Who

would

would venture to continue in sin, when the greatest miseries and calamities which we feel in this life are but a small and inconsiderable earnest of those woful wages which sinners shall receive in the day of Recompence.

Thirdly, The Judgments of God are *not only proper to these Ends, but in many cases very necessary.* Our condition many times is such as to require this severe way of proceeding, because no other course that God hath taken, or can take with us, will probably do us good. God does not delight in the miseries and calamities of his Creatures, but we put him upon these extremities, or rather his own goodness and wisdom together do prompt and direct him to these harsh and rigorous ways. May be we have brought our selves into that dangerous state, and the malignity of our distemper is such that it is not to be remov'd without violent Physick, and that cannot be administred to us without making us deadly sick.

So that the Judgments of God which are many times *abroad in the earth* are nothing else but the wise Methods which the great Physician of the World uses for the cure of Mankind; They are Rods of his School and the Discipline of his Providence, that *the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness*; They are a merciful invention of Heaven to do men that good which many times nothing else will, and to work that blessed effect upon us which neither the wise counsels and admonitions of God's Word, nor his milder and gentler dealings with us can usually attain.

Thus we find in the *Parable, Luke 15.* that the Providence of God makes use of hunger and extreme necessity to bring home the *Prodigal*; and by him our Saviour represents to us the temper of most sinners: For till we have spent that stock of mercies which God hath given us, till we come to be pinch'd we want and are *ready to perish*, we are not apt to entertain thoughts of *returning to our Father*.

It may be there are some sinners which are more tractable and easy to be reduced to goodness, that are not so headstrong and obstinate in their way but that they may be reclaimed by milder and softer means: But there are likewise a great many senseless and outrageous sinners, who are madly and furiously bent upon their own ruin: Now to treat these fairly, with the allurements of kindness and the gentle arts of persuasion, would be to no purpose: The only way that is left of dealing with them, is rigour and severity. When sinners are thus besides themselves, something that looks like Cruelty is perhaps the greatest mercy that can be shown to them; nothing so proper for such persons as a dark Room, and a spare Diet, and severe Usage; *A rod for the back of fools*; as the *Wise man* speaks.

Thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to speak to, namely *The merciful design and intention of God in sending Judgments upon a People*, which is to bring them to Repentance, and by Repentance to prevent their Ruin. I proceed to the

II. *The Reason of the continuance of God's Judgments*, because the People were not reclaimed by them; therefore *his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*, because *the people turnet not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

And how can it be expected it should be otherwise, when incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God is a provocation of so high a nature, a sign of a most deprav'd and incorrigible temper, and an argument of the greatest obstinacy in evil? Upon this account we find that the Holy Spirit of God in *Scripture* brands *Ahaz* as a singular and remarkable sort of sinner, (*2 Chron. 28. 22.*) because *in the time of his distress he sinned yet more*
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against the Lord. The longer *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* resisted the Judgments of God the more still they were harden'd, and the more they were plagu'd: *Lev. 26. 22.* after God had there threatned his people with several fore Judgments for their sins, he tells them, that if they *will not be reform'd by all these things* he will *punish them seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for their sins*: And if in such a case the just God will punish seven times more, we may safely conclude that sins after Judgments are seven times greater.

So likewise *Deut. 28.* after a long and dreadful Catalogue of Curses there denounc'd against the People of *Israel* in case of their disobedience, God at last threatens them with a Foreign *Enemy* that should *distress them in their gates*; And if they would not be reclaim'd by all this, he tells them, that he hath still more and greater Judgments for them in store, *v. 58, & 59.* *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that thou mayest fear this great and glorious Name, THE LORD THY GOD, then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderful.* If we be of so strange and monstrous a disposition as to grow worse under Judgments, God will deal with us after an unusual and prodigious manner, he will make our *plagues wonderful*.

This incorrigible temper the *Prophets* of old every where make the great aggravation of the sin of *Israel*, *Isa. 1. 4, 5.* *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity*; and after a great many other expressions to set forth what heinous sinners they were, he sums up all in this, That they were so far from being reform'd by the several Judgments of God which had been inflicted upon them, that they were the worse for correction; *Why should they be stricken any more? they will revolt more and more.* So likewise, *Hos. 7. 9, 10.* *Ephraim*, though brought very low, is represented as of the same refractory temper, *Strangers have devour'd his strength, &c. But they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.* I will mention but one *Text* more (and methinks it bears but too near a resemblance with our own condition, both in respect of the Judgments which have been upon us, and our carriage under them) *Amos 4.* where God upbraids his people several times with this as the great aggravation of their sins, That they continued impenitent under all those terrible Judgments of God which had been upon them; *I have sent among you (says he) Famine, and then Pestilence, and then the Sword, and last of all a terrible Fire which had almost utterly consumed them, ver. 11. I have overthrown some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluck'd out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me.* And because all these Judgments had not been effectual to reclaim them, He tells them that he was resolved to go on in punishing; and therefore he bids them to expect it and prepare themselves for it, *v. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* When God hath begun to punish a people and they are not amended by it, the honour of his Justice is concerned to proceed, and not to give over. By every sin that we commit we offend God, but if he smite us, and we stand out against him, then do we contend with him and strive for mastery. And when the sinner is upon these stubborn and insolent terms, then *prepare to meet thy God*; A bitter *Sarcasm*, as if man could be a match for God, and a poor weak creature in any wise able to encounter him to whom Power belongs. There's a severe expression concerning God's dealing with such perverse and obstinate sinners, *Psalms 18. 26. With the froward thou wilt shew thy self froward*, or, as the words may more properly and conveniently be rendred, *with the froward, thou wilt wrestle.* God will not be outbrav'd by the sins of men, and therefore if we
continue

continue impenitent we have all the reason in the world to expect that God will go on to punish.

But to come nearer to our selves and to consider our own case, which is in truth so very bad that we may almost be afraid to consider it. The wise and good God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, hath used all the arts of his providence towards this Nation to reclaim us. He hath invited us to him by many blessings, but we would not come; so (to borrow an apt illustration from a great Divine of our own) we have forced him to deal with us as *Absalom* did with *Joab*; he sent one civil message to him after another, but he would not come; at last he sets on fire his corn-field to try whether that would bring him: This course God hath taken with us, we would not be persuaded by messages of kindness (by his many blessings and favours) to return to him, and therefore hath he sent amongst us the terrible messengers of his wrath. First we were engag'd in a *Foreign War*, and tho' God was pleas'd to give us some considerable success in it, yet it seems our provocations were so great that he was resolv'd to punish us. He was loth to let us *fall into the hands of men*, and therefore he took the work into his own hand, and punish'd us himself, by sending a *Pestilence* amongst us, the forest and most destructive that hath befallen this Nation for many Ages. But we did not upon this, return to him, and therefore his fierce anger kindled a fearful *Fire* amongst us, which hath laid the honour of our Nation, one of the greatest and richest Cities in the World in the dust; and that by so sudden and irresistible, so dismal and amazing a devastation, as in all the circumstances of it is scarce to be parallel'd in any History.

Bishop
Saunderson.

I doubt not but most of us were mightily affected with this Judgment whilst it was upon us. So astonishing a calamity could not but make us open our eyes a little, and awaken us to consideration; Even the *rich man* in the *Gospel*, though he had all his life-time been immers'd in sensuality, yet could not but *lift up his eyes when he was in flames*.

And surely God expects that such Judgments as these should not only rouse us a little for the present, but that they should have a permanent operation and effect upon us, and work a thorough and lasting reformation amongst us; but yet I am afraid that this dreadful Fire hath had no other influence upon us but what it uses to have upon metals, which are only melted by it for the present, but when the Fire is removed they suddenly cool and return to their former hardness.

One would have thought that the sense of such a calamity as this should have remain'd longer upon us. Methinks God seem'd to say to us after this Judgment as he did once to *Jerusalem*, *Zeph. 3. 7. Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction*; but we (like them) have been but the more forward to provoke him, (*they rose early and corrupted their doings*) we have after all this, *harden'd our hearts from his fear and refused to return*. And therefore God is now come to one of his last Judgments, *Our Enemy distresses us in our Gates*. God hath begun to *let us fall into the hands of men*, and by giving our enemies a sudden and fatal advantage upon us, had smitten us with a *Breach great as the Sea*.

These were terrible calamities indeed to come so thick and so swiftly upon us, *like desolation, and as a Whirlwind*. Such a quick succession of Judgments, treading almost upon one anothers heels, does but too plainly declare that God is highly incens'd against us. For surely these are not the wounds of a Friend, but the terrible assaults of an Enemy. They do not look like the displeasure of a Father, but the severity of a Judge, not like *visitation*, but like *vengeance*.

And besides these more visible Judgments upon the Nation, we are by a secret curse of God insensibly decayed in our riches and strength. We are, I know not how, strangely impoverish'd in the midst of plenty, and almost undone by victories. And which adds to our misery, few among us seem to be sufficiently sensible of it, or to take any notice by what silent steps and imperceptible degrees (like gray hairs and the infirmities of old age) poverty and weakness are stealing in upon us: so that we may fitly apply to our selves what the Prophet says of *Ephraim, Hos. 7. 9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea gray hairs are here and there upon him, and yet he knoweth it not.*

And our condition as we are a Church, is not much better. How is this famous *Protestant Church* of ours, which was once the *Admiration* of her Friends and the envy of her Enemies, sunk and declin'd in her glory, and reduc'd into a very narrow compass? So that she is left like *the Daughter of Sion, (Isa. 1. 8.) as a Cottage in a Vineyard, as a Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers, as a besieged City*: straitned and hemm'd in on all parts, by the impudence of *Atheism*, the insolencies of *Popery*, and the turbulency of *Faction*; all which do every day visibly and apace gain ground upon her, and distress her on every side; just as the condition of the *Jewish Church* is described before my Text; *The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind, both ready to devour Israel with open mouth.*

And surely it is not for nothing that God hath brought us thus low, that he hath sent all these Judgments upon us, and that he doth still threaten us with more: The reason is plain, because we are still impenitent; *The people turneth not to him that smiteth them.* There hath been almost an universal degeneracy amongst us, and there is still, I fear, a general impenitency, *the people turneth not, &c.* Notwithstanding all those dismal Calamities which our eyes have seen, wickedness doth still prevail in the Nation and overflows it like a mighty Deluge, so as to overspread all ranks and orders of men: And not only so, but is grown impudent and appears *with a whores forehead*; all kind of modesty seems to have forsaken the sinners of this Age.

And is this Repentance? to live in filthy and abominable lusts, to tear the Name of God by horrid Oaths and Imprecations; to be Atheistical and prophane, and by an unexampled boldness to turn the *Word of God* it self and the gravest and most serious matters of Religion into *Raillery*? This is not *to turn to him that smiteth us*, but to turn upon him and smite him again. And yet such crying and clamorous sins as these are almost come to be the garb and fashion of the Nation, and to be accounted the wit and gallantry of the Age.

And shall not God visit for these things? shall not his soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? Yes, he hath visited; and 'tis for these things that the wrath of God hath been so manifestly revealed from Heaven against us. For this cause misery and destruction have been in our way, and the way of peace have we not known, because there hath been no fear of God before our eyes. Hence it is that *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, because the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.*

But do not we seek God? Do we not every day acknowledge our sins to him, and pray that he would have mercy upon us miserable offenders, and grant that we may hereafter live godly, righteous, and sober lives? Do not we seek the Lord of Hosts, when we continually beg of him to save

save and deliver us from the hand of our enemies? Indeed we do thus seek him, but we should first turn to him; otherwise if we hope our prayers will prevail with God to do us good we do but trust in lying words. If we go on in our sins our very prayers will become sin, and increase our guilt: For the prayer of the wicked (that is, of one that is resolved to continue so) is an abomination to the Lord. Can we think it reasonable for men to address themselves to God after this manner? Lord, though we have no mind to turn to thee, yet we pray thee turn away thine anger from us; though we are resolved not to forsake our sins, yet we make no doubt but that thy mercy will forgive them; give peace in our time, O Lord, that we may pursue our lusts securely and without disturbance: Deliver us we pray thee from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against thee without fear all the days of our lives. Would it not be horrible impudence and impiety to put up any such petitions to God? And yet this, I fear, is the most genuine interpretation of our prayers and lives compar'd together.

And if this be our case, what can we expect? God may give us peace with our Enemies, but then he will find out some other way to punish us: For if we still persist in our Atheism and Prophaneness, in our contempt of God and of his holy Worship, in our scorn and derision of Religion, in our abominable lusts and horrid impieties, what can we look for but that God should be angry with us until he have consumed us and there be no escaping? Nothing can be a sadder presage of our ruin, than not to be reformed by those dreadful Judgments of God which have been upon us. This was that which brought final destruction upon the Egyptians in the Red Sea, that they had held out so obstinately against so many Judgments, and had been harden'd under ten Plagues. To be impenitent after such severe corrections, is to poyson our selves with that which is intended for our Physick, and by a miraculous kind of obstinacy to turn the Rods of God into Serpents.

And now perhaps some will be apt to say, That these are things fit for men of our Profession, because it is our Trade and we live by it. Indeed they are so, things very fit to be said, and withal very fit for every one to consider, who professeth himself a Christian, and who owns the belief of a God, and a Providence, and another World. And if they be so, where is the fault? Is it, that there is a peculiar Profession of men whose proper work it is to tell men of their faults, and to persuade them to reform? No, there is no harm in that neither. Is it then that they live by their Profession, and yet would be believed? Yes, there lies the force of the objection. To which I shall only at present return this answer, That men do not argue thus in other cases, when yet the reason seems to be the very same. In matters that concern their Bodies and Estates, the Physician and the Lawyer are believed, though it is verily thought that they live by their Professions, as well as we; why then should men deal so partially and unequally only with their Souls? were we not moved by better principles, and swayed by the arguments and considerations of another world, we might, for ought we know, with every whit as much advantage to our selves suffer men to be quiet and to sleep on securely in their sins; If we did not believe our selves in these matters, what should hinder but that we might with as much gravity and confidence cry Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace; and flatter men with as much art and with

as good a grace, as any of those can do who *live delicately and wear soft cloathing*?

But we believe the threatnings of God, and therefore do we speak: We know the terror of the Lord, and therefore we endeavour to persuade men. And Oh! that we could persuade them to break off their sins by righteousness, and to turn every one from the evil of his way, and from the violence that is in his hands: And then who can tell but God may turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we perish not?

The good God make us all wise to know in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes; and grant that we may all turn to him that hath smitten us, by Repentance and real Reformation of our lives; that God may be pleased to turn away his Anger from us, and to stretch out his hand for our Deliverance; which we humbly beg of him for the sake of Christ. To whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

Of the Deceitfulness and Danger of Sin.

HEB. III. 13.

Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

AMong the many considerations which the Word of God and our own Reason offer to us to discourage us from sin this is none of the least considerable, that he that once engages in a vicious course is in danger to proceed in it, being insensibly trained on from one degree of wickedness to another; so that the farther he advances, his retreat grows more difficult, because he is still pushed on with a greater violence. All error, as well of practice as of judgment is endless; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he shall go on the harder he will find it to return into the right way. Therefore there is great reason why men should be so often cautioned against the beginnings of sin; or if they have been so unhappy as to be engaged in a bad course, why they should be warned to break it off presently and without delay, lest by degrees they be hardened in their wickedness, till their case grow desperate and past remedy. And to this purpose is the *Apostle's* advice here in the Text, *Exhort one another daily while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

From which words I shall

1. Endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do sensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course.

2. I shall from this consideration take occasion to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. And then

3. I shall apply my self to the duty here in the Text, of *exhorting* men with all earnestness and importunity to resist the beginnings of sin; or if they be already entred upon a wicked course, to make haste out of this dangerous state; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

I. *First*, I shall endeavour to represent to you the growing danger of sin, and by what steps and degrees bad habits do insensibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil course. All the actions of men which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice have something of difficulty in them when we begin to practise them, because at first we are rude and unexercised in that way: but after we have practised them awhile they become more easy: and when they are easy, we begin to take pleasure in them: and when they please us we do them frequently, and think

we cannot repeat them too often; and by frequency of Acts a thing grows into a habit: and a confirm'd habit is a second kind of nature: and so far as and thing is natural so far it is necessary, and we can hardly do otherwise; nay, we do it many times when we do not think of it. For by virtue of a habit a man's mind or body becomes pliable and inclined to such kind of actions as it is accustomed to, and does as it were stand bent and charged such a way; so that being touched and awakened by the least occasion, it breaks forth into such or such actions. And this is the natural progress of all habits indifferently considered, whether they be good or bad.

But vicious habits have a greater advantage, and are of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of man is a rank soil to which vice takes easily, and wherein it thrives apace. The mind of man hath need to be prepared for piety and virtue; it must be cultivated to that end, and ordered with great care and pains: But vices are weeds that grow wild and spring up of themselves. They are in some sort natural to the Soil, and therefore they need not to be planted and watered, 'tis sufficient if they be neglected and let alone. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, it is no wonder if occasion and temptation easily draw forth.

But that we may take a more distinct account of the progress of sin and by what steps vice gains upon men, I shall mark out to you some of the chief and more observable gradations of it.

1. Men begin with lesser sins. No man is perfectly wicked on the sudden. *Sunt quædam vitiorum elementia; there are certain rudiments of vice*, in which men are first entred, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and fouler crimes. For hath its infancy and tender age, and its several states of growth. Men are not so totally degenerate but at first they are ashamed when they venture upon a known sin, though it be but small in comparison. Hence it is that at first men are very solicitous to palliate and hide their faults by excuses, but after they have frequently committed them, and they grow too visible to be concealed, then they will attempt to defend and maintain them; and from thence they come by degrees to take pleasure in them, and in those that do the same things.

2. After men have been some time initiated in these lesser sins, by the commission of these they are prepared and disposed for greater; such as lay waste the conscience, and offer more violence to the light and reason of their minds. By degrees a sinner may grow to be so hardy as to attempt those crimes which at first he could not have had the thought of committing without horror. Like *Hazael*, who when he was told by the Prophet *Elisba* what barbarous cruelties he should one day be guilty of towards the People of *Israel* when he should come to be King of *Syria*, he abominated the very thought and mention of them; *Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?* and yet for all this we know he did it afterwards. 'Tis true indeed when a sinner is first tempted to the commission of a more gross and notorious sin, his conscience is apt to boggle and start at it, he doth it with great difficulty and regret; the terrors of his own mind and the fears of damnation are very troublesome to him; But this trouble wears off by degrees, and that which was at first difficult does by frequent practice and long custom become tolerable.

3. When a man hath proceeded thus far he begins to put off shame, one of the greatest restraints from sin which God hath laid upon humane nature. And when this curb once falls off, there is then but little left to restrain and hold us in. At first setting out upon a vicious course men are a little nice and delicate, like young Travellers, who at first are offended at every speck of dirt

dirt that lights upon them ; but after they have been accustomed to it, and have travell'd a good while in foul ways, it ceaseth to be troublesome to them to be dash'd and bespatter'd.

4. After this, it is possible, men may come to approve their vices. For if men's Judgments do not command their wills and restrain their *lusts*, it is great odds in process of time the vicious inclinations of their Wills will put a false byass upon their Judgments ; And then it is no wonder if men come to boast of their sins and to glory in their vices, when they are half perswaded that they are generous and commendable qualities. Thus much is certain in experience, that some men have gotten so perfect a habit of some sins as not to know and take notice many times when they commit them. - As in the case of swearing, which some men have so accustomed themselves to, that without any consideration they do of course put an oath or two into every sentence that comes from them. And it hath been observed of some persons that they have told an untruth so often, and averr'd it with so much confidence, till at last, forgetting that it was a lye at first, they themselves have in process of time believed it to be true.

5. From this pitch of wickedness men commonly proceed to draw in others and to make Profelytes to their vices. Now this signifies not only a great approbation of sin but even a fondness for it, when men are not content to sin upon their own single accounts, but they must turn zealous agents and factors for the Devil ; become *teachers* of sin and *ministers of unrighteousness*, and are factiously concerned to propagate together with their Atheistical principles their lewd practices, and to draw Followers and Disciples after them.

And when they are arrived to this height it is natural for them to hate reproof, and to resist the means of their recovery ; to quarrel against all the remedies that shall be offer'd to them, and to count those their greatest enemies who have so much courage and kindness as to deal plainly with them, and to tell them the truth. And then all the wise counsels of God's Word, and the most gentle and prudent admonitions in the world, when they are tendered to such persons, serve only to provoke their scorn or their passion. And surely that man is in a sad case that is so disposed, that in all probability he will turn the most effectual means of his amendment into the occasion of new and greater sins.

But that which renders the condition of such persons much more sad and deplorable is, that all this while God is withdrawing his grace from them. For every degree of sin causeth the Holy Spirit of God with all his blessed motions and assistances to retire farther from them : And not only so, but the Devil (that evil *Spirit* which the *Scripture* tells us, *works effectually in the children of disobedience*) does according as men improve in wickedness get a greater and a more establish'd dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil course are said in *Scripture* to be *rescued out of the snare of the Devil*, and to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God* ; so on the other hand, the farther men advance in the ways of sin so much the farther they depart from God, from under the influence of his grace, and the care of his protection and providence ; and they give the Devil (who is not apt to neglect his advantages upon them) greater opportunities every day to gain the firmer possession of them.

And thus by passing from one degree of sin to another, the sinner becomes harden'd in his wickedness and does insensibly slide into that in which without a miraculous grace of God he is like for ever to continue. For the mind of man after it hath been long accustomed to evil, and is once grown

old in vice, is almost as hard to be rectified as it is to recover a body bowed down with age to its first straightness. The *Scripture* speaks of some that *commit sin with greediness*, and *that drink up iniquity as the Ox drinketh up water*, with a mighty appetite and thirst, as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to express to us the miserable condition of such persons it representeth them as perfect slaves to their vices, that have *sold* themselves to do wickedness, and *are led captive by Satan at his pleasure*. And when men have brought themselves to this pass, they are almost under a fatal necessity of sinning on. I do not believe that God hath absolutely predestinated any man to ruin, but by a long course of wilful sin men may in a sort predestinate themselves to it, and chuse wickedness so long till it almost becomes necessary, and till they have brought themselves under all imaginable disadvantage of contributing any thing towards their own recovery: being bound in the chains of their own wickedness and held in the cords of their sins: Nay like *Sampson*, not only bound by those lusts which they have embraced, but likewise robbed of all their strength whereby they should break loose from those bonds. God grant that none of us may ever have the woful experience of it: but I am horribly afraid it is too true, that a sinner may arrive to that confirm'd state of impiety as almost totally to lose his liberty to do better: He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue to be a bad man upon the same account that the *Historian* extravagantly says *Cato* was virtuous, *Quia aliter esse non potuit; because he could not be otherwise*. Can the *Ethiopian* change his skin, or the *Leopard* his spots? It is the *Scripture*-comparison, to set forth to us how hard a thing it is for a man to be brought to goodness that hath been long accustomed to do evil. He that is thus deeply engaged and entangled in a bad course will scarce ever have the heart and resolution to break loose from it unless he be forced violently out of it by some severe affliction, by a sharp sickness, or by a terrible calamity, or by the present apprehensions of death and the terrors of a future Judgment. Nor will these be effectual neither to change such a person, without an extraordinary degree of God's grace; which considering the greatness and the continuance of his provocations, he hath very little reason to expect or hope God should ever bestow upon him. Wretched man! that hast brought thy self into this miserable state, out of which there is but just a possibility left of thy being rescued; that hast neglected thy disease so long till it is almost too late to apply remedies; that hast provoked God so far and sinned to such a prodigious height, that thou hast reason almost to despair both of his grace and assistance for thy repentance, and of his mercy for thy pardon. I speak not this to discourage even the greatest of sinners from repentance. Though their case be extremely difficult, yet it is not quite desperate. *For those things which seem impossible with men, are possible with God*. But I speak it on purpose to stop sinners in their course and to discourage men from going on in sin till they be hardened through the deceitfulness of it, and have brought themselves by insensible degrees into that dangerous and difficult state which I have all this while been representing to you. I come now to the

II. *Second* thing I propounded, which was from this consideration to shew what great reason and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to rescue them out of it. The *Apostle* directs this precept to all Christians, *Exhort one another daily, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. That is, lest you be hardened by degrees and finally ruined. And surely every man is concern'd to do what in him lies to rescue his brother

ther from so imminent a danger. It is every ones place and duty to endeavour to save those whom he sees ready to perish : Much more does it concern those who are peculiarly set apart for this work, I mean the Ministers of God's holy Word, whose proper office and business it is to *exhort and warn every man day and night*, who are *set as watchmen to the house of Israel*, and whose blood in case any of them miscarry through our neglect *shall be required at our hands*. So that if we believe the threatnings of God which we declare to others, if we have any apprehension of the dreadful misery of another world, if we have any sense of our own duty and safety, if we have any pity for perishing Souls, we cannot but be very importunate with sinners to look about them, and to consider their danger, and to bethink themselves seriously of the miserable event and issue of a wicked life : We cannot but be earnest with them *to break off their sins, and to give glory to God by repentance, before darkness come and their feet stumble upon the dark mountains*. When we are convinced more fully than we can desire, that *misery and destruction are in their ways*, when we plainly see the *evil day* hastening towards them apace, and *destruction coming upon them like a Whirlwind* ; heaven above threatening them, and *hell beneath moving her self to meet them at their coming*, can we possibly do less than to warn such persons *to flee from the wrath which is to come*, and out of a sad apprehension of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them against it, and endeavour with all our might to rescue them from the misery which is ready to swallow them up ? Indeed one would be apt to think it a very vain thing to dissuade men from being miserable, to use great vehemency of argument to hinder a man from leaping into a pit, or from running into the fire ; to take great pains to argue a sick man into a desire of health, and to make a prisoner contented to have his shackles knock'd off, and to be set at liberty : one would think all this were perfectly needless : But yet we see in experience sin is a thing of so stupifying a nature as to make men insensible of their danger, although it be so near, and so terrible. It is not so with men in other cases : When we labour of any bodily distemper, it is much to find a man that is patient of his disease ; but when our souls are mortally sick, that we should be contented with our condition, and fond of our disease, that we should fight with our Physician, and spurn at our remedy ; this surely is the height of distraction, for men to be thus absolutely bent upon their own ruin, and to resolve to make away themselves for ever. And we who are the Messengers of God to men must be born of the rocks, and have hearts *harder than the nether millstone*, if we can patiently look on and endure to see men perish without using our utmost endeavour to save them. Therefore I shall in the

III. *Third and last* place apply my self to this work of *Exhortation*, the duty commanded here in the text. And here I shall address my self to two sorts of persons :

1. To perswade those who are yet innocent of great crimes to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees.
2. To press and urge those that are already entred upon a wicked course, that they would make haste out of this dangerous state ; *lest at last they be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

1. To perswade those who are yet in some measure innocent, to resist the beginnings of sin, lest it gain upon them by degrees. Vice may easily be discouraged at first. 'Tis like a slight disease, when it is easy to be cured, but

dangerous to be neglected. The first approaches of sin and temptation are usually very modest, but if they be not discountenanc'd they will soon grow upon us and make bolder attempts. Every inclination to sin, every compliance with temptation is a going down the hill: While we keep our standing we may command our selves, but if we once put our selves into violent motion downward we cannot stop when we please.

Omne in præcipiti vitium stetit—

Seneca.

All Vice stands upon a Precipice, and to engage in any sinful course is to run down the hill. And if we once let loose the Propensions of our Nature we cannot gather in the reins and govern them as we please; If we give way to *presumptuous sins* they will quickly get *dominion over us*. It is much easier not to begin a bad course than to put a stop to our selves after we have begun it. *Stulta res est nequitiae modus*, 'Tis a fond thing for a man to think to set bounds to himself in any thing that is bad, to resolve to sin in number, weight and measure, with great temperance and discretion, and government of himself: that he will commit this sin and then give over, entertain but this one temptation, and after that he will shut the door and admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts when they are once in motion, they are like the raging Sea, to which we can set no bounds, nor say to it, *Hitherto shalt thou go and no further*. Sin is very cunning and deceitful, and does strangely gain upon men when they once give way to it. It is of a very bewitching nature, and hath strange arts of address and insinuation. The giving the way to a small sin does marvellously prepare and dispose a man for a greater. By giving way to one little vice after another the strongest resolution may be broken. For tho' it be not to be snapt in sunder at once, yet by this means it is untwisted by degrees, and then 'tis easy to break it one thread after another. 'Tis scarce imaginable of what force one single action is to produce more: For sin is very teeming and fruitful; and tho' there be no *blessing* annex'd to it, yet it does strangely *increase and multiply*. As there is a connection of one virtue with another, so vices are link'd together, and one sin draws many after it. When the Devil tempts a man to commit any wickedness he does as it were lay a long train of sins, and if the first temptation take, they give fire to one another. Let us then resist the beginnings of sin, because then we have most power, and sin hath least. This is the *first*.

2. To persuade those who are already engaged in a wicked course, to make haste out of this dangerous state. And there is no other way to get out of it but by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives; for herein the nature of true repentance does consist. And without this all the devices which men use to get rid of the guilt of their sins are vain and to no purpose. 'Tis not to be done by a formal confession and absolution, nor by a long pilgrimage, nor by one of those little Tickets from *Rome* which they call *Indulgences*. A wise man would much sooner persuade himself that God will not at all punish the sins of men, than that he would forgive them so easily, and receive great offenders to favour upon such slight terms. Let us not deceive our selves, there is one plain way to Heaven, by sincere repentance and a holy life, and there is no getting thither by tricks. And without this change of our lives all our sorrow and fasting and humiliation for sin, which at this season we make profession of, will signify nothing. There is an excellent passage of the Son of *Sirach* to this purpose, *Ecclus. 34. 25, 26. He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again what availeth his washing? So is it with a man that fasteth*
for

for his sins, and goeth again and doth the same things, who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him? There is this plain difference between trouble for sin and Repentance; sorrow only respects sins past, but repentance is chiefly preventive of sins for the future: And God therefore requires that we should be troubled for our sins, that we may resolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and speedy resolution in this matter, let us consider that we have engaged too far already in a bad course; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult; that by our delays we make work for a sadder and longer repentance than that which we do now so studiously decline: Let us consider likewise, that our life is concerned in the case; that *except we repent and turn, we shall dye*: And that the evil day may overtake us while we are deliberating whether we should avoid it or not; that vice is so far from being mortified by age, that by every days continuance in it we increase the power of it; and so much strength as we add to our disease we certainly take from our selves; And this is a double weakning of us, when we do not only lose our own strength, but the enemy gets it and employs it against us. The deceitfulness of sin appears in nothing more than in keeping men off from this necessary work, and persuading them to hazard all upon the unreasonable hopes of the mercy of God, and the uncertain resolution of a future repentance. I do not think there are any here but do either believe, or at least are vehemently afraid that there is another life after this; and that a wicked life, without repentance must unavoidably make them miserable in another world; and that to cast off all to a death-bed repentance, puts things upon a mighty hazard. And they have a great deal of reason to think so: For alas, how unfit are most men at such a time for so great and serious a work as repentance is, when they are unfit for the smallest matters: And how hard is it for any man then to be assured of the truth and reality of his repentance, when there is no sufficient opportunity to make trial of the sincerity of it. I deny not the possibility of the thing; but it is much to be fear'd that the repentance of a dying sinner is usually but like the sorrow of a malefactor, when he is ready to be turned off; he is not troubled that he hath offended the Law, but he is troubled that he must dye. For when death is ready to seize upon the sinner, and he feels himself dropping into destruction, no wonder if then the man's stomach come down, and he be contented to be saved; and seeing he must stay no longer in this world, be desirous to go to Heaven rather than Hell; and in order to that, be ready to give some testimonies of his repentance: no wonder if when the rack is before him this extort confession from him, and if in hopes of a pardon he make many large promises of amendment, and freely declare his resolution of a new and better life. But then it is the hardest thing in the world to judge whether any thing of all this that is done under so great a fear and force be real. For a sick man as he hath lost an appetite to the most pleasant meats and drinks, so likewise his sinful pleasures and fleshly lusts are at the same time nauseous to him, and for the very same reason: For Sickness having alter'd the temper of his body, he hath not at that time any gust or relish for these things. And now he is resolved against sin, just as a man that hath no stomach is resolved against meat. But if the fit were over, and death would but raise his Siege and remove his quarters a little farther from him, it is to be feared that his former appetite would soon return to him, and that he would sin with the same eagerness he did before. Besides, how can we expect that God should accept of his repentance at such a time, when we are conscious to our selves that we did resolve to put off our repentance till we could sin no longer? Can we think it fit for any man

man to say thus to God in a dying hour ; “ Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, who could never afford to give thee one good day of my life : Grant that I may live with thee and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think upon thee. I must confess that I could never be perswaded to leave my sins out of love to thee, but now I repent of them for fear of thee : I am conscious to my self that I would never do any thing for thy sake, but yet I hope thy goodness is such that thou wilt forgive all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of my life, and accept of this forced submission which I now make to thee. I pray thee do not at last frustrate and disappoint me in this design which I have laid, of sinning while I live and getting to Heaven when I dye.” Surely no man can think it fit to say thus to God ; and yet I am afraid this is the true interpretation of many a man’s repentance who hath deferr’d it till he comes to dye. I do not speak this to discourage repentance, even at that time. It is always the best thing we can do. But I would by all means discourage men from putting off so necessary a work till then. ’Tis true indeed when ’tis come to this and a sinner finds himself going out of the world, if he have been so foolish and so cruel to himself as to put things upon this last hazard, repentance is now the only thing that is left for him to do ; this is his last remedy and the only refuge he has to fly to : And this is that which the Minister in this case ought by all means to put the man upon, and earnestly to perswade him to. But when we speak to men in other circumstances, that are well and in health, we dare not for all the world encourage them to venture their souls upon such an uncertainty. For to speak the best of it, it is a very dangerous remedy, especially when men have designedly contriv’d to rob God of the service of their best days, and to put him off with a few unprofitable sighs and tears at the hour of death. I desire to have as large apprehensions of the mercy of God as any man, but withal, I am very sure that he is the hardest to be imposed upon of any one in the World. And no man that hath any worthy apprehensions of the Deity can imagine him to be so easy, as to forgive men upon the least word and intimation of their minds, and to have such a fondness for offenders as would reflect upon the prudence of any Magistrate and Governor upon Earth. God grant that I may sincerely endeavour to live a holy and virtuous life, and may have the comfort of that when I come to dye : And that I may never be so unwise as to venture all my hopes of a blessed eternity upon a death-bed repentance.

I will conclude all with those excellent sayings of the Son of *Syrach* (*Ecclus. 5. 6, 7. 16. 11, 12. 18. 21, 22.*) *Say not, God’s mercy is great, and he will be pacified for the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath is with him ; he is mighty to forgive, and to pour out displeasure : And as his mercy is great, so are his corrections also. Therefore make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day : for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed. Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of sins shew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not till death to be justified.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XI.

The Hazard of being Saved in the Church of *Rome*.

I COR. III. 15.

But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by Fire.

THE Context is thus. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise Master-builder, I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it; because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

In these words the Apostle speaks of a sort of persons, who held indeed the foundation of *Christianity*, but built upon it such *doctrines* or *practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expresses to us by *wood, hay, and stubble*, which are not *proof* against the *Fire*. Such a person, the Apostle tells us, hath brought himself into a very dangerous state, though he would not deny the possibility of his salvation; *He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.*

That by *fire* here is not meant the fire of *Purgatory*, as some pretend (who would be glad of any shadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I shall neither trouble you nor my self to manifest; since the *Particle* of similitude [*ως*] plainly shews that the Apostle did not intend an escape out of the fire *literally*, but like to that which men make out of a House or Town that is on fire. Especially since very learned persons of the Church of *Rome* do acknowledge that *Purgatory* cannot be concluded from this *Text*, nay all that *Estius* contends for from this *place* is, that it cannot be concluded from hence that there is no *Purgatory*; which we never pretended, but only that this Text doth not prove it.

It is very well known that this is a Proverbial phrase used not only in Scripture, but in prophane Authors to signify a narrow escape out of a great danger. He shall be saved, yet so as by fire, *διὰ τοῦ πυρὸς*, out of the fire. Just as *δι' ὕδατος* is used 1 Pet. 3. 20. where the Apostle speaking of the eight persons of Noah's family who escap'd the flood, *διὰ τὴν ὕδατος δι' ὕδατος*, they escaped out of the water. So here this phrase is to be rendred in the Text, *he himself shall escape, yet so as out of the fire*. The like expression you have, Amos 4. 11. *I have pluck'd them as a firebrand out of the fire*. And Jude 23. *Others save with fear, plucking them out of the fire*. All which expressions signify the greatness of the danger and the difficulty of escaping it; as one who when his house at midnight is set on fire, and being suddenly wak'd leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him, but

but employing his whole care to save his body from the flames, as S. Chrysostom upon another occasion expresseth it. And so the Roman Orator * (who it is likely did not think of Purgatory) used this phrase; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit*: From which Judgment or Sentence he escaped naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the Greek Orators † tells us, That to save a man out of the fire, was a common proverbial speech.

* Tully.

† Ariftides.

From the words thus explained, the Observation that naturally ariseth is this, That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Christian Religion, and yet may superadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their salvation. What those things were which some among the Corinthians built upon the foundation of Christianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture by what the Apostle reproves in this Epistle, as the tolerating of incestuous marriages, communicating in Idol Feasts, &c. And especially by the Doctrine of the false Apostles, who at that time did so much disturb the peace of most Christian Churches, and who are so often and so severely reflected upon in this Epistle. And what their Doctrine was, we have an account, Acts 15. viz. that they imposed upon the Gentile Christians Circumcision, and the observation of the Jewish Law, teaching that unless they were circumcised, and kept the Law of Moses, they could not be saved. So that they did not only build these doctrines upon Christianity, but they made them equal with the Foundation, saying, that unless men believed and practised such things they could not be saved.

In speaking to this Observation, I shall reduce my discourse to these two Heads.

1. I shall present to you some Doctrines and Practices which have been built upon the Foundation of Christianity, to the great hazard and danger of mens salvation. And to be plain, I mean particularly the Church of Rome.

2. I shall enquire, whether our granting a possibility of salvation (tho with great hazard) to those in the communion of the Roman Church, and their denying it to us, be a reasonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himself to that Church.

And there is the more reason to consider these things, when so many seducing Spirits are so active and busy to pervert men from the truth; and when we see every day so many men and their Religion so easily parted. For this reason these two Considerations shall be the subject of the following discourse.

I. First, We will consider some Doctrines and Practices which the Church of Rome hath built upon the foundation of Christianity, to the great hazard and danger of mens salvation. It is not denied by the most judicious Protestants, but that the Church of Rome do hold all the Articles of the Christian Faith which are necessary to salvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a just ground of our separation from them, is the imposing of new Doctrines and practices upon Christians as necessary to salvation, which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apostles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Christianity, or too apparently destructive of a good life. And I begin,

1. With their Doctrines. And because I have no mind to aggravate lesser matters, I will single out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Christian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apostles, nor own'd in the first Ages of Christianity. And the

First which I shall mention, and which being once admitted makes way for as many Errors as they please to bring in, is their Doctrine of Infallibility.

And

And this they are very stiff and peremptory in, tho they are not agreed among themselves where this *Infallibility* is seated ; whether in the *Pope alone*, or a *Council alone*, or in *both together*, or in the *diffusive body of Christians*. But they are sure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice against it ? Can any man think that this *privilege* was at first conferred upon the Church of *Rome*, and that Christians in all Ages did believe it, and had constant recourse to it for determining their differences, and yet that that very Church which hath enjoyed and used it so long should now be at a loss where to find it ? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there should be such differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only means of ending all differences.

There is not the least intimation in Scripture of this *Privilege* conferr'd upon the *Roman Church*, nor do the Apostles, in all their Epistles, ever so much as give the least direction to Christians to appeal to the Bishop of *Rome* for a determination of the many differences which even in those times happen'd among them. And it is strange they should be so silent in this matter, when there were so many *occasions* to speak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed such an *Infallible Judge* of controversies for this very end to decide the differences that should happen among Christians. It is strange that the *Ancient Fathers* in their disputes with Hereticks should never appeal to this *Judge* ; nay it is strange they should not constantly do it in all cases, it being so short and expedite a way for the ending of controversies. And this very consideration to a wise man is instead of a thousand arguments to satisfy him that in those times no such thing was believed in the world.

Now this *Doctrine of Infallibility*, if it be not true, is of so much the more pernicious consequence to Christianity, because the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it, in all their other errors ; and gives them a pretence of assuming an authority to themselves to impose their own fancies and mistakes upon the whole Christian world.

2. Their *Doctrine about Repentance*, which consists in confessing their sins to the Priest ; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *contrition*, does upon *absolution* received from the Priest put them into a state of *salvation*, tho they have lived the most lewd and debauch'd lives that can be imagin'd ; than which nothing can be more plainly destructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the most wicked man runs of his salvation is only the danger of *so sudden a death* as gives him no space for confession and absolution. A case that happens so rarely, that any man that is strongly addicted to his lusts will be content to venture his salvation upon this hazard ; and all the arguments to a good life will be very insignificant to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when remission of sins may be had upon such cheap terms.

3. *The Doctrine of Purgatory* ; By which they mean an estate of temporary punishments after this life, from which men may be released and translated into Heaven by the prayers of the living, and the Sacrifice of the *Mass*. That this *Doctrine* was not known in the Primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church ; which is to acknowledge that it is a superstructure upon the Christian Religion. And tho in one sense it be indeed a building of *gold and silver* upon the foundation of Christianity, considering the vast revenues which this *Doctrine* (and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it) brings into that Church ; yet I doubt not, but in the Apostles sense, it will be found to be *hay and stubble*. But how groundless soever it be, it is too gainful a *Doctrine* to be easily parted withal.

4. *The Doctrine of Transubstantiation.* A hard word, but I would to God that were the worst of it; the *thing* is much more difficult. I have taken some pains to consider other Religions that have been in the world, and I must freely declare, that I never yet in any of them met with any Article or Proposition, imposed upon the belief of men, half so unreasonable and hard to be believed as this is: And yet this in the *Romish Church* is esteemed one of the most principal Articles of the Christian Faith; tho there is no more certain foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviour's being substantially changed into all those things which are said of him, as that he is a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, and a hundred other things.

But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not only *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge against it, namely, that it undermines the very foundation of Christianity it self. And surely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Christian Doctrine* which destroys the reason of our belief of the whole. And that this Doctrine does so, will appear evidently, if we consider what was the main argument which the Apostles used to convince the world of the *truth of Christianity*; and that was this, *That our blessed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought such and such miracles, and particularly that he rose again from the dead.* And this they proved because they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, and had seen him and conversed with him after he was risen from the dead. But what if their senses did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Christianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now suppose (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Transubstantiation* to have been one principal part of the Christian Doctrine which the Apostles preached. But if this Doctrine be true, then all mens senses are deceived in a plain sensible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived as in any thing in the world: For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of wafer and the *whole body* of a man. So that the Apostles persuading men to believe this Doctrine persuaded them not to trust their senses, and yet the argument which they used to persuade them to this was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens senses are to be trusted.* For if they be not, then notwithstanding all the evidence the Apostles offer'd for the resurrection of our Saviour, he might not be risen, and so the faith of Christians was vain. So that they represent the Apostles as absurd as is possible, *viz.* going about to persuade men out of their senses by virtue of an argument, the whole strength whereof depends upon the certainty of sense.

And now the matter is brought to a fair issue; If the testimony of *sense* be to be relied upon, then *Transubstantiation* is false; If it be not, then no man is sure that Christianity is true. For the utmost assurance that the Apostles had of the truth of Christianity was the testimony of their own senses concerning our Saviour's Miracles, and this testimony every man hath against *Transubstantiation.* From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no not the Apostles themselves) had more reason to believe *Christianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Transubstantiation* to be false. And we who did not see our Saviour's Miracles (as the Apostles did) and have only a credible relation of them, but do see the *Sacrament*, have less evidence of the *truth of Christianity* than of the *falsehood of Transubstantiation.*

But cannot God impose upon the senses of men, and represent things to them otherwise than they are? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Most certainly. But then we ought to be assured that he hath made such a Revelation; which *Assurance* no man can have, the certainty of sense being taken away. I shall

I shall press the business a little farther. Supposing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that these words (*This is my Body*) if they be in *Scripture*, must necessarily be taken in the strict and literal sense; I ask now, what greater evidence any man has that these words (*This is my Body*) are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has so much; for we have only the evidence of *one* sense that these words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring testimony of *several* of our senses. In a word, if this be once admitted that the *Senses* of all men are deceiv'd in one of the most plain sensible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to men; nor is there any way to confute the grossest impostures in the world: For if the clear evidence of all mens senses be not sufficient for this purpose, let any man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument.

5. I will instance but in one *Doctrine* more; And that shall be, their *Doctrine* of *deposing Kings* in case of Heresy, and absolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a mere *speculative doctrine*, but hath been put in practice many a time by the Bishops of *Rome*, as every one knows that is vers'd in History. For the troubles and confusions which were occasion'd by this very thing make up a good part of the History of several Ages.

I hope no body expects that I should take the pains to shew that this was not the *Doctrine* of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the Primitive Christians. The *Papists* are many of them so far from pretending this, that in some times and places, when it is not seasonable and for their purpose, we have much a-do to persuade them that ever it was their *Doctrine*. But if *Transubstantiation* be their *Doctrine*, *this* is; for they came both out of the same Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Transubstantiation* was then establish'd so was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins and brought forth at the same time, they are so like one another, both of them so monstrously unreasonable.

II. I come now in the *second* place to consider some *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I shall instance in these five.

1. Their celebrating of their Divine service *in an unknown tongue*. And that not only contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and design of Religious Worship, which is the edification of those who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be edified by what they do not understand) but likewise in direct contradiction to *St. Paul*, who hath no less than a whole Chapter wherein he confutes this practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this practice was not condemned by *St. Paul*, or that it was allowed and used in the first Ages of Christianity, need not be ashamed to set up for the defence of any Paradox in the World.

2. The *Communion in one kind*. And that notwithstanding that even by their own acknowledgment our Saviour instituted it in both kinds, and the Primitive Church administred it in both kinds. This I must acknowledge is *no addition* to Christianity but a *sacrilegious taking away* of an essential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as essential a part of the institution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the same authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their worshipping of *Images*. Which practice (notwithstanding all their distinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* used in the same case) is as point-blank against the *second commandment*, as a *deliberate and malicious killing* of a man is against the *sixth*. But if the case be so plain, a man would think that at least the Teachers and Guides of that Church should be sensible of it. Why, they are so, and afraid the people should be so too, and therefore in their ordinary *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of Devotion they leave out the *second Commandment*, and divide the *tenth* into two to make up the number; lest if the common people should know it their Consciences should start at the doing of a thing so directly contrary to the plain command of God.

4. The worshipping of the *Bread* and *Wine* in the Eucharist, out of a false and groundless persuasion, *that they are substantially changed into the body and blood of Christ*. Which if it be not true (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the most incredible things in the whole World) then by the confession of several of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *gross Idolatry*.

5. The worship and invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the Virgin *Mary*, which hath now for some Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may justly wonder that so considerable a part of Religion as they make this to be should have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where speak one word concerning the worshipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occasions to restrain all extravagant apprehensions and imaginations concerning honour due to Her, as foreseeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his Mother and Brethren were without; *Who* (says he) *are my mother and my brethren? He that doth the will of my Father, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother*. And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the blessed Mother of our Lord, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!* Our Saviour diverts to another thing, *Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*. Does either our Saviour or his Apostles in all their particular Precepts and Directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to address our selves to God, give the least intimation of praying to the Virgin *Mary*, or making use of her Mediation? And can any man believe, that if this had been the practice of the Church from the beginning, our Saviour and his Apostles would have been so silent about so considerable a part of Religion; insomuch that in all the Epistles of the Apostles I do not remember that her Name is so much as once mentioned? And yet the worship of her is at this day in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been so for several Ages, a main part of their publick worship, yea and of their private devotions too; in which it is usual with them to say *ten Ave Marias* for one *Pater Noster*; that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God, they make ten addresses to the blessed Virgin; for that is the proportion observed in their *Rosaries*. He that considers *this*, and had never seen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think that there had been more said concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*, or our blessed Saviour; and that the New Testament were full from one end to the other of precepts and exhortations to the worshipping of Her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to shew me so much as one Sentence in the whole Bible that sounds that way. And there is as little in the Christian Writers of the first three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among some superstitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*: And I remember particularly, that

that *Epiphanius* who lived about that time calls it the *Heresy of the Women*.

And thus I have given you some Instances of several *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the Foundation of *Christianity*. Much more might have been said of them, but from what hath been said any man may easily discern how dangerous they are to the salvation of men.

I proceed now in the Second place,

II. To consider, Whether our granting a *possibility of salvation*, though with great hazard, to those in the Communion of the *Roman Church*, and their denying it to us, be a sufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to consider this, because this is the great *popular argument* wherewith the *emissaries* and *agents* of that Church are wont to assault our people. *Your Church* (say they) *grants that a Papist may be saved; Ours denies that a Protestant can be saved; therefore it is safest to be of our Church, in which salvation by the acknowledgment of both sides is possible.*

For answer to this I shall endeavour to shew, that this is so far from being a good argument that it is so intolerably weak and *sophistical* that any considerate man ought to be ashamed to be caught by it. For either it is good of it self and sufficient to persuade a man to relinquish our Church, and to pass over to theirs, without entering into the merits of the cause on either side, and without comparing the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not sufficient of it self to persuade a man to leave our Church, without comparing the *Doctrines* on both sides, then it is to no purpose, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of *Doctrines* the one appear to be true and the other false, this alone is a sufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true *Doctrine* is found; and then there is no need of this argument.

If it be said that this argument is good in it self without the examination of the *Doctrines* of both Churches; this seems a very strange thing for any man to affirm, *That it is reason enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her Doctrines and Practices be, if she do but damn those that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow a possibility of salvation in her Communion.*

But they who use this argument, pretend that it is sufficient of it self; and therefore I shall apply my self to shew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miserable weakness and insufficiency of it to satisfy any man's conscience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I shall,

1. Shew the weakness of the principle upon which this argument relies.
2. Give some parallel instances by which it will clearly appear that it concludes false.
3. I shall take notice of some gross absurdities that follow from it.
4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon those to whom it is propounded.

And

5. How improper it is to be urged by those that make use of it.

I. I shall shew the weakness of the principle upon which this argument relies; And that is this, *That whatever different parties in Religion agree in, is safest to be chosen.* The true consequence of which principle if it be driven to the head, is to persuade men to forsake Christianity, and to make them take up in the principles of *natural Religion*, for in these all Religions do agree. For if this principle be true, and signify any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the several parties in Religion differ; because that only is safe and prudent to be chosen wherein all agree. So that this argument,

gument, if the foundation of it be good, will persuade farther than those who make use of it desire it should do; for it will not only make men forsake the *Protestant Religion*, but *Popery* too; and which is much more considerable, *Christianity* it self.

II. I will give some *parallel instances* by which it will clearly be seen that this *argument* concludes false. The *Donatists* denied the Baptism of the *Catholicks* to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledg'd the Baptism of the *Donatists* to be valid. So that both sides were agreed that the Baptism of the *Donatists* was good, therefore the safest way for St. *Austin* and other *Catholicks* (according to this *argument*) was to be baptized again by the *Donatists*, because by the acknowledgment of both sides Baptism among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of *Rome*. Several in that Church hold the *personal Infallibility of the Pope*, and the *lawfulness of deposing and killing Kings for Heresy* to be *de fide*, that is, necessary Articles of Faith, and consequently, that whoever does not believe them cannot be saved. But a great many *Papists* though they believe these things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think those that hold them may be saved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this *argument*, they ought all to be of their opinion in these points because both sides are agreed that *they that hold them may be saved*; but one side positively says that *men cannot be saved if they do not hold them*.

But my Text furnishes me with as good an instance to this purpose as can be desired. St. *Paul* here in the Text acknowledgeth the *possibility* of the *salvation* of those who built hay and stubble upon the foundation of *Christianity*; that they might be saved, tho with great difficulty, and as it were out of the fire. But now among those builders with hay and stubble there were those who denied the possibility of St. *Paul's* salvation and of those who were of his mind. We are told of some who built the *Jewish Ceremonies* and observances upon the foundation of *Christianity*, and said that unless men were Circumcised and kept the Law of *Moses* they could not be saved. So that by this argument St. *Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to those *Judaizing Christians*, because it was acknowledged on both sides that they might be saved. But these *Judaizing Christians* were as uncharitable to St. *Paul* and other *Christians*, as the Church of *Rome* is now to us, for they said positively that they could not be saved. But can any man think that St. *Paul* would have been moved by this argument, to leave a safe and certain way of salvation for that which was only possible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The argument you see is the very same, and yet it concludes the wrong way; which plainly shews that it is a *contingent argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

III. I shall take notice of some *gross absurdities* that follow from it. I shall mention but these two.

I. According to this *principle* it is always safest to be on the *uncharitable side*. And yet uncharitableness is as bad an evidence, either of a true *Christian*, or a true Church, as a man would wish. *Charity* is one of the most essential marks of *Christianity*, and what the Apostle saith of particular *Christians* is as true of whole Churches, that though they have all Faith, yet if they have not *Charity* they are nothing.

I grant that no *Charity* teacheth men to see others damned and not to tell them the danger of their condition. But it is to be consider'd that the damning

ing of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it the case must be wonderfully plain. And is it so in this matter? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour contain'd in the Apostles Creed, and determin'd by the Four first General Councils: and yet they will not allow this and a good life to put us within a possibility of Salvation, because we will not submit to all the innovations they would impose upon us. And yet I think there is scarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice* in difference between them and us, which some or other of their most learned Writers have not acknowledg'd either not to be sufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practis'd by the primitive Church; so that nothing can excuse their uncharitableness towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this *argument*, for they do what in them lies to make themselves no Christians that they may prove themselves the truer and more Christian Church. A *medium* which we do not desire to make use of.

2. If this *argument* were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in an error which another does not account damnable, whatever it be, provided he do but damn all those that do not hold it; and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableness* to do this. But is there any sense, that another mans boldness and want of charity should be an argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illustrate this better, than by the difference between a skilful Physician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and a *skilful Physician* is modest, and speaks *justly* of things: he says, that such a method of cure which he hath directed is safe; and withal, that that which the *Mountebank* prescribes may possibly do the work, but there is great hazard and danger in it; But the *Mountebank*, who never talks of any thing less than *Infallible cures*, (and always the more *Mountebank* the stronger pretence to *Infallibility*) he is positive that that method which the *Physician* prescribes will destroy the Patient, but his receipt is infallible and never fails. Is there any reason in this case, that this man shall carry it merely by his *confidence*? And yet if this *argument* be good, the safest way is to reject the *Physician's* advice and to stick to the *Mountebank's*. For both sides are agreed, that there is a possibility of cure in the *Mountebank's* method, but not in the *Physician's*; and so the whole force of the argument lies in the *confidence* of an ignorant man.

IV. This *argument* is very unfit to work upon those to whom it is propounded: For either they believe we say true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reason to be moved by what we say. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we say in this matter? Namely, that though it be possible for some in the Communion of the *Roman Church* to be saved, yet it is very hazardous; and that they are in a safe condition already in our Church. And why then should a *bare possibility*, accompanied with infinite and apparent hazard, be an argument to any man to run into that danger?

Lastly, This *argument* is very improper to be urged by those who make use of it. Half of the strength of it lies in this, that we *Protestants* acknowledge that *it is possible a Papist may be saved*. But why should they lay any stress upon this? What matter is it what we Hereticks say, who are so damnably mistaken in all other things? Methinks if there were no other reason, yet because we say it, it should seem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive when it serves for their purpose we have some little credit and authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in some measure satisfied of the weakness
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of *this argument*, which is so transparent that no wise man can honestly use it, and he must have a very odd understanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is a *casual and contingent argument*, and sometimes it concludes right, and oftner wrong; and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one case, when all things are so equal on both sides that there is nothing else in the whole world to determine him; which surely can never happen in matters of Religion, necessary to be believed. No man is so weak, as not to consider in the change of his Religion the *merits of the cause it self*; as not to examine the *Doctrines and Practices* of the Churches on both sides; as not to take notice of the *confidence* and *Charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conscientious and a prudent man: And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either side, then this *argument* is needless and comes too late, because the work is already done without it.

Besides, that the great hazard of salvation in the *Roman Church* (which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines and Practices* which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged possibility of salvation in it ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it; Never did any Christian Church build so much *hay and stubble* upon the *foundation* of Christianity, and therefore *those that are saved in it must be saved*, as it were *out of the fire*. And tho *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well suited to their manner of building; for there is need of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a *fire* to try their work what it is, and to *burn up their hay and stubble*. And I have so much Charity (and I desire always to have it) as to hope, that a great many among them who lived piously, and have been almost inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general Repentance* find mercy with God; and *tho their works suffer loss, and be burnt, yet they themselves may escape, as out of the fire*. But as for those who had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth, if they continue in the errors of that Church, or apostatize from the truth, I think their condition so far from being safe that there must be extraordinary favourable circumstances in their case to give a man hopes of their salvation.

I have now done with the *two things* I propounded to speak to. And I am sorry that the *necessary defence* of our Religion, against the *restless importunities* and *attempts* of our adversaries upon all sorts of persons, hath engaged me to spend so much time in matters of dispute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witnesses that I have constantly made it my business, in this great Presence and Assembly to plead against the *impieties* and *wickedness* of men, and have endeavoured by the best arguments I could think of to gain men over to a *firm belief* and serious *practice* of the main things of Religion. And I do assure you, I had much rather persuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Christians whatsoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the ancient Creed*, provided we entertain nothing that is destructive of it, *together with a good life, will certainly save a man*; and without this no man can have reasonable hopes of salvation, no not in an infallible Church, if there were any such to be found in the world.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent observer of the *genius* and humour of the several Sects and Professions in Religion; and upon the whole matter, I do in my conscience believe the Church of *England* to be the best constituted Church this day in the world; and that

as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worship* of it, are excellently framed to make men *soberly Religious* : Securing men on the one hand, from the wild freaks of *Enthusiasm* ; and on the other, from the gross follies of *Superstition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above several Professions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and just subordination to the *civil Authority*, and hath always been untainted in its *Loyalty*.

And now shall every trifling consideration be sufficient to move a man to relinquish such a Church? There is no greater disparagement to a man's understanding, no greater argument of a light and ungenerous mind, than rashly to change one's Religion. Religion is our greatest concernment of all other, and it is not every little argument, no nor a great noise about *infallibility*, nothing but very plain and convincing evidence, that should sway a man in this case. But they are utterly inexcusable who make a change of such concernment upon the insinuations of one side only, without ever hearing what can be said for the Church they were baptized and brought up in before they leave it. They that can yield thus easily to the impressions of every one that hath a design and interest to make *Profelytes*, may at this rate of discretion change their Religion twice a day, and instead of morning and evening Prayer, they may have a morning and evening Religion. Therefore for God's sake, and for our own Souls sake, and for the sake of our Reputation let us consider and shew our selves men ; Let us not suffer our selves to be shaken and carried away with every wind. Let us not run our selves into danger when we may be safe. Let us stick to the foundation of Religion, the Articles of our common belief, and build upon them gold, and silver, and precious stones, I mean, the virtues and actions of a good life ; and if we would do this, we should not be apt to set such a value upon hay and stubble. If we would sincerely endeavour to live holy and virtuous lives, we should not need to cast about for a Religion which may furnish us with easy and indirect ways to get to Heaven.

I will conclude all with the Apostle's Exhortation, *Wherefore my beloved Brethren be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the works of the Lord.*

Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will ; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XII.

Of the Inward Peace and Pleasure which attends Religion.

P S A L. CXIX. 165.

Great Peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.

IN these words there are two things contained, the Description of a good man, and the Reward of his goodness.

1. The description of a good man: he is said to be one that *loves the Law* of God, that is, that loves to meditate upon it, and to practise it.
2. The Reward of his goodness; *Great peace have they that love thy Law.* The word *Peace* is many times used in Scripture in a very large sense, so as to comprehend all kind of happiness: sometimes it signifies outward peace and quiet, in opposition to war and contention; and sometimes inward peace and contentment in opposition to inward trouble and anguish. I understand the *Text* chiefly in this last sense, not wholly excluding either of the other.

My design at present from these words is, to recommend Religion to men from the consideration of that inward peace and pleasure which attends it. And surely nothing can be said more to the advantage of Religion in the opinion of considerate men than this. For the aim of all Philosophy, and the great search of wise men, hath been how to attain peace and tranquility of mind. And if Religion be able to give this, a greater commendation need not be given to Religion.

But before I enter upon this argument, I shall premise *two* things by way of Caution.

First, That these kind of Observations are not to be taken too strictly and rigorously, as if they never failed in any one instance. *Aristotle* observed long since, that moral and proverbial sayings are understood to be true generally and for the most part; and that is all the truth that is to be expected in them; As, when *Solomon* says, *Train up a child in the way wherein he shall go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*: This is not to be so taken as if no child that is piously educated did ever miscarry afterwards, but that the good education of children is the best way to make good men, and commonly approved to be so by experience. So here, when it is said that *great peace have they that love God's Law*; the meaning is that Religion hath generally this effect, though in some cases, and as to some persons, it may be accidentally hindered.

Secondly, When I say that Religion gives peace and tranquility to our minds, this is chiefly to be understood of a Religious state in which a man is well settled and confirmed, and not of our first entrance into it, for that

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is more or less troublesome according as we make it. If we begin a religious course betimes, before we have contracted any great guilt, and before the habits of sin be grown strong in us, the work goes on easily without any great conflict or resistance. But the case is otherwise when a man breaks off from a wicked life, and becomes religious from the direct contrary course in which he hath been long and deeply engaged. In this case no man is so unreasonable as to deny, that there is a great deal of sensible trouble and difficulty in the making of this change; but when it is once made, peace and comfort will spring up by degrees, and daily increase as we grow more confirmed and established in a good course.

These two things being premised, I shall now endeavour to shew that Religion gives a man the greatest pleasure and satisfaction of mind, and that there is no true peace, nor any comparable pleasure to be had in a contrary course. And that from these two heads. From *Testimony of Scripture*; and from the *Nature of Religion* which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind.

I. *First, From Testimony of Scripture.* I shall select some of those *Texts* which are more full and express to this purpose, *Job 22. 21.* speaking of God, *Acquaint thyself now with him and be at peace.* To acquaint our selves with God is a phrase of the same importance with coming to God, and seeking of him, and many other like expressions in Scripture which signify nothing else but to become religious. *Psal. 37. 38.* Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace: Or, as the words are rendred according to the LXX. in our old Translation, *Keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring thee peace at the last.* *Prov. 3. 17.* Where Solomon speaking of *Wisdom*, which with him is but another name for Religion, says, *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* *II. 32. 17.* The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. *Matth. 11. 28, 29.* Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Now to come to Christ is to become his Disciples, to believe and practise his doctrine; for so our Saviour explains himself in the next words, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your Souls.* *Rom. 2. 10.* Glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.

And on the contrary the Scripture represents the condition of a sinner to be full of trouble and disquiet. *David* tho' he was a very good man, yet when he had grievously offended God the anguish of his mind was such, as even to disorder and distemper his body, *Psal. 38. 2, 3, 4.* Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore; there is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me. *Isa. 51. 20, 21.* The wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. And *Isa. 59. 7, 8.* Misery and destruction are in their paths, and the way of peace they know not; they have made themselves crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. *Rom. 2. 9.* Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.

You see how full and express the Scripture is in this matter. I come now in the

II. *Second place,* To give you a more particular account of this from the *Nature of Religion*, which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind. And that I shall do in these three particulars.

1. Religion is apt to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet.

2. It furnishes us with all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind.

3. The reflection upon a religious course of life and all the actions of it, doth afterwards yield great pleasure and satisfaction.

First, Religion is apt to remove the chief causes of inward trouble and disquiet. The chief causes of inward trouble and discontent are these *two*, *Doubting* and anxiety of mind, and *Guilt* of Conscience. Now Religion is apt to free us from both these.

1. From *Doubting* and anxiety of mind. Irreligion and Atheism makes a man full of doubts and jealousies whether he be in the right, and whether at last things will not prove quite otherwise than he hath rashly determined. For tho' a man endeavour never so much to settle himself in the principles of Infidelity, and to persuade his mind that there is no God, and consequently that there are no rewards to be hoped for, nor punishments to be feared in another life; yet he can never attain to a steady and unshaken persuasion of these things: and however he may please himself with witty reasons against the common belief of mankind, and smart repartees to their arguments, and bold and pleasant raillery about these matters; yet I dare say, no man ever fate down in a clear and full satisfaction concerning them. For when he hath done all that he can to reason himself out of Religion, his conscience ever and anon recoils upon him, and his natural thoughts and apprehensions rise up against his reasonings, and all his wit and subtilty is confuted and born down by a secret and strong suspicion, which he can by no means get out of his mind, that things may be otherwise.

And the reason hereof is plain, because all this is an endeavour against nature and those vigorous instincts which God hath planted in the minds of men to the contrary. For whenever our minds are free and not violently hurried away by passion, nor blinded by prejudice, they do of themselves return to their first and most natural apprehension of things. And this is the reason why when the Atheist falls into any great calamity, and is awakened to an impartial consideration of things by the apprehension of Death and Judgment, and despairs of enjoying any longer those pleasures for the sake of which he hath all this while rebelled against Religion, his courage presently sinks, and all his arguments fail him, and his case is now too serious to admit of jesting, and at the bottom of his soul he doubts of all that which he asserted with so much confidence and set so good a face upon before, and can find no ease to his mind but in retreating from his former principles, nor no hopes of consolation for himself but in acknowledging that God whom he hath denied, and imploring his mercy whom he hath affronted.

This is always the case of these persons when they come to extremity, not to mention the infinite checks and rebukes which their own minds give them upon other occasions; so that 'tis very seldom that these men have any tolerable enjoyment of themselves, but are forc'd to run away from themselves into company, and to stupify themselves by intemperance, that they may not feel the fearful twitches and gripings of their own minds.

Whereas he who entertains the principles of Religion, and therein follows his own natural apprehensions and the general voice of mankind, and is not conscious to himself that he knowingly and wilfully lives contrary to these principles, hath no anxiety in his mind about these things; being verily persuaded they are true, and that he hath all the reason in the world to think so; and if they should prove otherwise (which he hath no other cause to suspect) yet he hath this satisfaction, that he hath taken the wisest course and hath consulted his own present peace and future security infinitely better than

than the Atheist hath done, in case he should prove to be mistaken. For it is a fatal mistake to think there is no God, if there be one; but a mistake on the other hand hath no future bad consequences depending upon it, nor indeed any great present inconvenience, Religion only restraining a man from doing some things, from most of which it is good he should be restrained however; so that at the worst the religious man is only mistaken, but the Atheist is miserable if he be mistaken; *miserable* beyond all imagination, and past all remedy.

2. Another, and indeed a principal cause of trouble and discontent to the minds of men is *Guilt*. Now Guilt is a consciousness to our selves that we have done amiss, and the very thought that we have done amiss is apt to lye very cross in our minds and to cause great anguish and confusion. Besides that guilt is always attended with Fear, which naturally springs up in the mind of man from a secret apprehension of the mischief and inconvenience that his sin will bring upon him, and of the vengeance that hangs over him from God, and will overtake him either in this World, or in the other.

And tho the sinner, while he is in full health and prosperity, may make a shift to divert and shake off these Fears; yet they frequently return upon him, and upon every little noise of danger, upon the apprehension of any calamity that comes near him, his guilty mind is presently jealous that it is making towards him and is particularly levelled against him. For he is sensible that there is a just power above him to whose indignation he is continually liable, and therefore he is always in fear of him, and how long soever he may have escaped punishment in this world he cannot but dread the vengeance of the other; And these thoughts are a continual disturbance to his mind and *in the midst of laughter make his heart heavy*, and the longer he continues in a wicked course the more he multiplies the grounds and causes of his fears.

But now Religion frees a man from all this torment, either by preventing the cause of it, or directing to the cure; either by preserving us from guilt, or clearing us of it in case we have contracted it. It preserves us from guilt by keeping us innocent; and in case we have offended, it clears us of it by leading us to repentance and the amendment of our lives; which is the only way to recover the favour of God and the peace of our own consciences, and to secure us against all apprehension of danger from the divine Justice; tho' not absolutely from all fear of punishment in this world, yet from that which is the greatest danger of all, the condemnation and torment of the world to come. And by this means a man's mind is settled in perfect peace, Religion freeing him from those tormenting fears of the Divine displeasure, which he can upon no other terms rid himself of; whereas the sinner is always sowing the seeds of trouble in his own mind, and laying the foundation of continual discontent to himself.

Secondly, As Religion removes the chief grounds of trouble and disquiet, so it *ministers to us all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind*. Whoever lives according to the Rules of Religion lays these three great foundations of peace and comfort to himself.

1. He is satisfied that in being religious he doth that which is most reasonable.

2. That he secures himself against the greatest mischiefs and dangers by making God his Friend.

3. That upon the whole matter he does in all respects most effectually consult and promote his own interest and happiness.

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1. He is satisfied that he does that which is most reasonable. And it is no small pleasure to be justified to our selves, to be satisfied that we are what we ought to be, and do what in reason we ought to do; that which best becomes us, and which according to the primitive intention of our Being is most natural, for whatever is natural is pleasant. Now the practice of piety towards God, and of every other grace and virtue which Religion teaches us, are things reasonable in themselves, and what God when he made us intended we should do. And a man is then pleased with himself and his own actions, when he doth what he is convinced he ought to do; and is then offended with himself, when he goes against the light of his own mind by neglecting his duty or doing contrary to it; for then his conscience checks him, and there is something within him that is uneasy and puts him into disorder. As when a man eats or drinks any thing that is unwholsom it offends his stomach, and puts his body into an unnatural and a restless state.

For every thing is then at rest and peace when it is in that state in which Nature intended it to be, and being violently forced out of it, it is never quiet till it recover again. Now Religion and the practice of its virtue is the natural state of the soul, the condition to which God designed it. As God made man a Reasonable Creature, so all the acts of Religion are reasonable and suitable to our nature: And our souls are then in health when we are what the Laws of Religion require us to be, and do what they command us to do. And as we find an unexpressible ease and pleasure when our body is in its perfect state of health, and on the contrary every distemper causeth pain and uneasiness; so is it with the Soul. When Religion governs all our inclinations and actions, and the temper of our minds and the course of our lives is conformable to the precepts of it, all is at peace. But when we are otherwise, and live in any vicious practice, how can there be peace; so long as we act unreasonably, and do those things whereby we necessarily create trouble and disturbance to our selves? How can we hope to be at ease so long as we are in a sick and diseased condition? Till the corruption that is in us be wrought out, our spirits will be in a perpetual tumult and fermentation; and it is as impossible for us to enjoy the peace and serenity of our minds as it is for a sick man to be at ease: The man may use what arts of diversion he will, and change from one place and posture to another: but still he is restless, because there is that within him gives him pain and disturbance, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* Such men may dissemble their condition, and put on the face and appearance of pleasantness and contentment; but God who sees all the secrets of mens hearts, knows it is far otherwise with them, *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

2. Another ground of peace which the Religious man hath is, That he hath made God his Friend. Now Friendship is peace and pleasure both; It is mutual love, and that is a double pleasure; And it is hard to say which is the greatest, the pleasure of loving God, or of knowing that he loves us. Now whoever sincerely endeavours to please God may rest perfectly assured that God hath no displeasure against him; for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance shall behold the upright*; that is, he will be favourable to such persons. *As he hates the workers of iniquity, so he takes pleasure in them that fear him, in such as keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

And being assured of his favour, we are secured against the greatest dangers and the greatest fears; and may say with David, *Return then unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee; The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life,*

of whom shall I be afraid? What can reasonably trouble or discontent that man who hath made his peace with God and is restored to his favour, who is the best and most powerful friend, and can be the forest and most dangerous enemy in the whole world?

3. By being religious we do most effectually consult our own interest and happiness. A great part of Religion consists in moderating our appetites and passions, and this naturally tends to the composure of our minds. He that lives piously and virtuously acts according to Reason, and in so doing maintains the present peace of his own mind; and not only so, but he lays the foundation of his future happiness to all eternity. For Religion gives a man the hopes of Eternal life; and all pleasure does not consist in present enjoyment; there is a mighty pleasure also, in the firm belief and expectation of a future good; and if it be a great and lasting good, it will support a man under a great many present evils. If Religion be certainly the way to avoid the greatest evils, and to bring us to happiness at last, we may contentedly bear a great many afflictions for its sake. For though all sufferings be grievous yet it is pleasant to escape great dangers, and to come to the possession of a mighty good, tho it be with great difficulty and inconvenience to our selves. And when we come to heaven (if ever we be so happy as to get thither) it will be a new and greater pleasure to us to remember the pains and troubles whereby we were saved and made happy.

So that all these put together are a firm foundation of peace and comfort to a good man. There is a great satisfaction in the very doing of our duty and acting reasonably, tho there may happen to be some present trouble and inconvenience in it. But when we do not only satisfy our selves in so doing, but likewise please him whose favour is better than life, and whose frowns are more terrible than death; when in doing our duty we directly promote our own happiness, and in serving God do most effectually serve our own interest, what can be imagined to minister more peace and pleasure to the mind of man?

This is the *second thing*. Religion furnishes us with all the true causes of peace and tranquility of mind.

Thirdly, the reflection upon a religious and virtuous course of life doth afterwards yield a mighty pleasure and satisfaction. And what can commend Religion more to us, than that the remembrance of any pious and virtuous action gives us so much contentment and delight? So that whatever difficulty and reluctancy we may find in the doing of it, to be sure there is peace and satisfaction in the looking back upon it. No man ever reflected upon himself with regret for having done his duty to God or man; for having lived soberly, or righteously, or godly in this present world. Nay, on the contrary, the conscience of any duty faithfully discharged, the memory of any good we have done does refresh the soul with a strange kind of pleasure and joy, *Our rejoicing is this (saith St. Paul) the testimony of our consciences, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

But on the other side, the course of a vicious life, all acts of impiety to God, of malice and injustice to men, of intemperance and excess in reference to our selves, do certainly leave a sting behind them. And whatever pleasure there may be in the present act of them, the memory of them is so tormenting that men are glad to use all the arts of diversion to fence off the thoughts of them. One of the greatest troubles in the world to a bad man is to look into himself, and to remember how he hath lived. I appeal to the consciences of men whether this be not true.

And

And is not here now a mighty difference between these two courses of life; that when we do any thing that is good, if there be any trouble in it it is soon over, but the pleasure of it is perpetual: when we do a wicked action the pleasure of it is short and transient, but the trouble and sting of it remains for ever? The reflection upon the good we have done gives a lasting satisfaction to our minds, but the remembrance of any evil committed by us leaves a perpetual discontent.

And, which is yet more considerable, a religious and virtuous course of life does then yield most peace and comfort when we most stand in need of it; in times of affliction and at the hour of death. When a man falls into any great calamity there is no comfort in the world like to that of a good conscience; This makes all calm and serene within when there is nothing but clouds and darkness about him. So *David* observes of the good man, *Psal. 112. 4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.* All the pious and virtuous actions that we do are so many seeds of peace and comfort, sown in our consciences, which will spring up and flourish most in times of outward trouble and distress, *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.* And at the hour of death; *The righteous hath hopes in his death,* saith *Solomon.* And what a seasonable refreshment is it to the mind of man when the pangs of death are ready to take hold of him, and he is just stepping into the other world, to be able to look back with satisfaction upon a religious and well-spent life? Then if ever, the comforts of a good man do overflow, and a kind of heaven springs up in his mind, and he rejoiceth in the hopes of the glory of God. And that is a true and solid comfort indeed, which will stand by us in the day of adversity, and stick close to us when we have most need of it.

But with the ungodly it is not so: His guilt lies in wait for him, especially against such times? and is never more fierce and raging than in the day of distress? so that according as his troubles without are multiplied, so are his stings within. And surely affliction is then grievous indeed when it falls upon a gall'd and uneasy mind. Were it not for this, outward afflictions might be tolerable; the *spirit of a man might bear his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* But especially at the hour of death. How does the guilt of his wicked life then stare him in the face? What storms and tempests are raised in his soul? which make it like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. When Eternity, that fearful and amazing sight presents its self to his mind, and he feels himself sinking into the regions of darkness, and is every moment in a fearful expectation of meeting with the just reward of his deeds; with what regret does he then remember the sins of his life? and how full of rage and indignation is he against himself for having neglected to know, when he had so many opportunities of knowing them, the things that belong to his peace; and which, because he hath neglected them, are now and likely to be for ever hid from his eyes?

And if this be the true case of the righteous and wicked man, I need not multiply words, but may leave it to any man's thoughts in which of these conditions he would be. And surely the difference between them is so very plain that there can be no difficulty in the choice.

But now tho this discourse be very true, yet for the full clearing of this matter it will be but fair to consider what may be said on the other side; And the rather, because there are several objections which seem to be countenanced from experience, which is enough to overthrow the most plausible speculations. As

1. That wicked men seem to have a great deal of pleasure and contentment in their Vices.

2. That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of.

3. That those who are Religious are many times very disconsolate and full of trouble.

To the *first*, I deny not that wicked men have some pleasure in their vices; but when all things are rightly computed, and just abatements made, it will amount to very little. For it is the lowest and meanest kind of pleasure, it is chiefly the pleasure of our bodies and our senses, of our worst part; the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man; that which least becomes us, and which we were least of all made for. Those sensual pleasures which are lawful are much inferior to the least satisfaction of the mind, and when they are unlawful they are always inconsistent with it. And *what is a man profited*, if to gain a little sensual pleasure he lose the peace of his soul? Can we find in our hearts to call that pleasure which robs us of a far greater and higher satisfaction than it brings? The delights of sense are so far from being the chief pleasure for which God designed us, that on the contrary he intended we shou'd take our chief pleasure in the restraining and moderating of our sensual appetites and desires, and in keeping them within the bounds of Reason and Religion.

And then, It is not a lasting pleasure. Those fits of mirth which wicked men have, how soon are they over? Like a sudden blaze which after a little flash and noise is presently gone. It is the comparison of a very great and experienced man in these matters; *Like the crackling of thorns under a pot* (saith Solomon) *so is the laughter of the fool*, that is, the mirth of the wicked man; it may be loud, but it lasts not.

But, which is most considerable of all, the pleasures of sin bear no proportion to that long and black train of miseries and inconveniences which they draw after them. Many times poverty and reproach, pains and diseases upon our bodies, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil*. So that if these pleasures were greater than they are, a man had better be without them than purchase them at such dear rates.

To the *second*. That Religion imposeth many harsh and grievous things, which seem to be inconsistent with that pleasure and satisfaction I have spoken of: As, the bearing of persecution, repentance and mortification, fasting and abstinence, and many other rigors and severities. As to persecution; This Discourse doth not pretend that Religion exempts men from outward troubles; but that, when they happen, it supports men under them better than any thing else. As for Repentance and Mortification; this chiefly concerns our first entrance into Religion after a wicked life, which I acknowledged in the beginning of this discourse to be very grievous; but this doth not hinder but that tho' Religion may be troublesome at first to some persons whose former sins and crimes have made it so, it may be pleasant afterwards when we are accustomed to it. And whatever the trouble of repentance be, it is unavoidable, unless we resolve to be miserable; for *except we repent we must perish*. Now there is always a rational satisfaction in submitting to a less inconvenience to remedy and prevent a greater. As for Fasting and Abstinence, which is many times very helpful and subservient to the ends of Religion, there is no such extraordinary trouble in it, if it be discreetly managed, as is worth the speaking of. And as for other rigors and severities which some pretend Religion does impose, I have only this to say, that if men will play the fool, and make Religion more troublesome than God hath made

made it, I cannot help that : And, that this is a false Representation of Religion which some in the World have made, as if it did chiefly consist not in pleasing God, but in displeasing and tormenting our selves. This is not to paint Religion like her self, but rather like one of the *Furies*, with nothing but Whips and Snakes about her.

To the *third*, That those who are religious are many times very disconsolate and full of trouble. This, I confess is a great Objection indeed, if Religion were the Cause of this Trouble, but there are other plain Causes of it, to which Religion rightly understood is not accessary. As, false and mistaken Principles in Religion : The imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God : And a melancholy temper and disposition. *False and mistaken principles in Religion*. As this for one ; That God does not sincerely desire the Salvation of Men, but hath from all eternity effectually barr'd the greatest part of mankind from all possibility of attaining that happiness which he offers to them ; and every one hath cause to fear that he may be in that number. This were a melancholy consideration indeed, if it were true ; but there is no ground either from Reason or Scripture to entertain any such thought of God. Our *destruction is of our selves* ; and no man shall be ruin'd by any decree of God who does not ruin himself by his own fault.

Or else, *the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God*. Some perhaps are very devout in serving God, but not so kind and charitable, so just and honest in their dealings with men. No wonder if such persons be disquieted ; the natural consciences of men being not more apt to disquiet them for any thing, than for the neglect of those moral duties, which natural light teacheth them. Peace of conscience is the effect of an impartial and universal obedience to the Laws of God ; and I hope no man will blame Religion for that which plainly proceeds from the want of Religion.

Or lastly, *A melancholy temper and disposition* which is not from Religion, but from our nature and constitution ; and therefore Religion ought not to be charged with it.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as briefly and plainly as I cou'd, to represent to you what peace and pleasure, what comfort and satisfaction, Religion rightly understood and sincerely practised is apt to bring to the minds of Men. And I do not know by what sort of Argument Religion can be more effectually recommended to wise and considerate men. For in persuading men to be religious, I do not go about to rob them of any true pleasure and contentment, but to direct them to the very best, nay indeed the only way of attaining and securing it.

I speak this in great pity and compassion to those who make it their great design to please themselves, but do grievously mistake the way to it. The direct way is that which I have set before you, a holy and virtuous life, *to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world*. A good man (saith Solomon) is satisfied from himself : He hath the pleasure of being wise and acting reasonably ; the pleasure of being justified to himself in what he doth, and of being acquitted by the sentence of his own mind. There is a great pleasure in being innocent, because that prevents guilt and trouble : It is pleasant to be virtuous and good, because that is to excel many others ; and it is pleasant to grow better, because that is to excel our selves : Nay it is pleasant even to mortify and subdue our lusts, because that is Victory : It is pleasant to command our appetites and passions, and to keep them in due order, within the bounds of Reason and Religion ; because this is a kind of Empire, this is to govern. It is naturally pleasant to rule and have power over others, but he is the great and the absolute

lure Prince who commands himself. This is *the kingdom of God within us*, a dominion infinitely to be preferred before all *the kingdoms of this World*, and *the glory of them*. It is the *Kingdom of God* described by the *Apostle*, which consists in *righteousness and peace*, and *joy in the Holy Ghost*. In a word, the pleasure of being good and doing good is the chief happiness of God himself.

But now the wicked man deprives himself of all this pleasure, and creates perpetual discontent to his own mind. O the torments of a guilty conscience! which the sinner feels more or less all his life long. But, alas thou dost not yet know the worst of it, no not in this world. What wilt thou do when thou comest to die? What comfort wilt thou then be able to give thy self? or what comfort can any one else give thee, when thy conscience is miserably rent and torn by those waking furies which will then rage in thy breast, and thou knowest not which way to turn thy self for ease; then, perhaps at last, the Priest is unwillingly sent for, to patch up thy conscience as well as he can, and to appease the cries of it; and to force himself out of very pity and good nature to say *peace, peace*, when there is no peace. But alas man! what can we do? what comfort can we give thee, when thine iniquities testify against thee to thy very face? *How can there be peace*, when thy lusts and debaucheries, thy impieties to God and thy injuries to men have been so many? *How can there be peace* when thy whole life hath been a continued contempt and provocation of Almighty God, and a perpetual violence and affront to the light and reason of thy own mind?

Therefore whatever temptation there may be in sin at a distance, whatever pleasure in the act and commission of it, yet remember that it always goes off with trouble, and will be bitterness in the end. Those words of Solomon have a terrible sting in the conclusion of them, *Rejoyce, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

This one thought which will very often unavoidably break into our minds (that *God will bring us into judgment*) is enough to dash all our contentment, and to spoil all the pleasure of a sinful life. Never expect to be quiet in thine own mind, and to have the true enjoyment of thy self till thou livest a virtuous and religious life.

And if this discourse be true (as I am confident I have every man's conscience on my side) I say if this be true, let us venture to be wise and happy, that is, to be religious. Let us resolve to *break off our sins by repentance*, to *fear God and keep his commandments*, as ever we desire to avoid the unspeakable torments of a guilty mind, and wou'd not be perpetually uneasy to our selves.

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we may every one of us know and do in this our day the things that belong to our peace before they be hid from our eyes. And the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, by the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XIII.

The Nature and Benefit of Consideration.

P S A L. CXIX. 59.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

THE two great causes of the ruin of men are *Infidelity*, and *want of consideration*. Some do not believe the principles of Religion; or at least have by arguing against them rendered them so doubtful to themselves as to take away the force and efficacy of them: But these are but a very small part of mankind, in comparison of those who perish for want of considering these things. For most men take the principles of Religion for granted, *That there is a God, and a Providence, and a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life*, and never entertained any considerable doubt in their minds to the contrary: but for all this they never attended to the proper and natural consequences of these principles, nor applied them to their own case; they never seriously consider'd the notorious inconsistency of their lives with this belief, and what manner of persons they ought to be who are verily persuaded of the truth of these things.

For no man that is convinced that there is a God, and considers the necessary and immediate consequences of such a persuasion, can think it safe to affront Him by a wicked life: no man that believes the infinite happiness and misery of another world, and considers withal that one of these shall certainly be his portion according as he demeans himself in this present life, can think it indifferent what course he takes. Men may thrust away these thoughts and keep them out of their minds for a long time, but no man, that enters into the serious consideration of these matters, can possibly think it a thing indifferent to him whether he be happy or miserable for ever.

So that a great part of the evils of mens lives would be cured, if they would but once lay them to heart; would they but seriously consider the consequences of a wicked life, they would see so plain reason and so urgent a necessity for the reforming of it, that they would not venture to continue any longer in it. This course *David* took here in the Text, and he found the happy success of it; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.*

In which words there are these two things considerable.

I. The course which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.*

II. The success of this course. It produced actual and speedy reformation; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

These are the two heads of my following discourse, which when I have spoken to, I shall endeavour to persuade my self and you to take the same course

course which *David* here did, and God grant that I may have the same effect.

I. We will consider the course which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways*, or, as the Words are render'd in our old Translation, *I called my own ways to remembrance*. And this may either signify a general survey and examination of his life, respecting indifferently the good or bad actions of it: Or else, which is more probable, it may specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of his life; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my sins to remembrance. Neither of these senses can be much amiss in order to the effect mentioned in the Text, the reformation and amendment of our lives; and therefore neither of them can reasonably be excluded, though I shall principally insist upon the latter.

1. This *thinking on our ways* may signify a general survey and examination of our lives; respecting indifferently our good and bad actions. For *Way* is a Metaphorical word, denoting the course of a man's life and actions. *I thought on my ways*, that is, I examined my life, and called my self to a strict account for the actions of it; I compared them with the law of God, the rule and measure of my duty, and consider'd how far I had obeyed that Law, or offended against it; how much evil I had been guilty of, and how little good I had done, in comparison of what I might and ought to have done: That by this means I might come to understand the true state and condition of my soul, and discerning how many and great my faults and defects were, I might amend whatever was amiss, and be more careful of my duty for the future.

And it must needs be a thing of excellent use, for men to set apart some particular times for the examination of themselves, that they may know how accounts stand between God and them. *Pythagoras* (or whoever was the Author of those golden verses which pass under his name) doth especially recommend this practice to his Scholars, every night before they slept, to call themselves to account for the actions of the day past; enquiring wherein they had transgressed, what good they had done that day, or omitted to do. And this, no doubt, is an admirable means to improve men in virtue, a most effectual way to keep our consciences continually waking and tender, and to make us stand in awe of our selves, and afraid to sin when we know beforehand that we must give so severe an account to our selves of every action.

And certainly it is a great piece of wisdom to make up our accounts as frequently as we can, that our repentance may in some measure keep pace with the errors and failings of our lives, and that we may not be oppressed and confounded by the insupportable weight of the sins of a whole life falling upon us at once; and that perhaps at the very worst time, when we are sick and weak, and have neither understanding nor leisure to recollect our selves, and to call our sins distinctly to remembrance, much less to exercise any fit and proper acts of repentance for them. For there is nothing to be done in Religion when our Reason is once departed from us; then darkness hath overtaken us indeed, and *the night is come when no man can work*. But tho we were never so sensible and should do all we can at that time, yet after all this, how it will go with us God alone knows. I am sure it is too much presumption for any man to be confident that one general and confused act of repentance will serve his turn for the sins of his whole life. Therefore there is great reason why we shou'd often examine our selves, both in order to the amendment of our lives, and the ease of our consciences when we come to die.

2. This

2. This *thinking of our ways* may particularly and specially refer to the sins and miscarriages of our lives: *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my sins to remembrance; I took a particular account of the Errors of my life, and laid them seriously to heart; I consider'd all the Circumstances and consequences of them, and all other things belonging to them; and reasoning the matter throughly with my self, came to a peremptory and fix'd resolution of breaking off this wicked course of life, and betaking my self to the obedience of God's Laws. And the *consideration of our ways* taken in this sense (which seems to be the more probable meaning of the words) may reasonably imply in it these following particulars.

1. The taking of a particular account of our sins, together with the several circumstances and aggravations of them.

2. A hearty trouble and sorrow for them; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid them sadly to heart.

3. A serious consideration of the evil and unreasonableness of a sinful course.

4. A due sense of the fearful and fatal consequences of a wicked life.

5. A full conviction of the necessity of quitting of this course.

6. An apprehension of the possibility of doing this.

1. *The taking of a particular account of our sins, together with the several circumstances and aggravations of them.* And to this end we may do well to reflect particularly upon the several stages and periods of our lives, and to recollect at least the principal miscarriages belonging to each of them. And the better to enable us hereto it will be useful to have before our eyes some abridgment or summary of the Laws of God, containing the chief heads of our Duties and Sins, of Virtues and Vices; for this will help to bring many of our faults and neglects to our remembrance, which otherwise perhaps would have been forgotten by us. We should likewise consider the several relations wherein we have stood to others, and how far we have transgress'd or fail'd of our duty in any of these respects.

And having thus far made up our sad account, we may in great measure understand the number and greatness of our sins; abating for some particulars which are slip't out of our memory, and for sins of ignorance, and daily infirmities which are innumerable. By all which we may see what vile wretches and grievous offenders we have been; especially if we take into consideration the several heavy circumstances of our sins; which do above-measure aggravate them; the heinousness of many of them as to their nature, and the injurious consequences of them to the person, or estate, or reputation of our neighbour; their having been committed against the clear knowledge of our duty, against the frequent checks and convictions of our consciences, telling us when we did them that we did amiss; against so many motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit, so many admonitions and reproofs from others; and contrary to our own most serious vows and resolutions, renewed at several times, especially upon the receiving of the blessed Sacrament, and in times of sickness and distress: And all this notwithstanding the plainest declarations of God's will to the contrary; notwithstanding the terrors of the Lord and the wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; notwithstanding the cruel sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, and the most merciful offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood. Add to this the scandal of our wicked lives to our holy Religion, the ill example of them to the corrupting and debauching of others, the affront of them to the Divine Au-

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thority,

thority, and the horrible ingratitude of them to the mercy and goodness and patience of God to which we have such infinite obligations. Thus we should set our sins in order before our eyes with the several aggravations of them.

2. A hearty *trouble and sorrow* for sin; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid my sins sadly to heart. And surely, whenever we remember the faults and follies of our lives, we cannot but be inwardly touched and sensibly grieved at the thoughts of them; we cannot but hang down our heads, and smite upon our breasts, and be in pain and heaviness at our very hearts. I know that the tempers of men are different, and therefore I do not say that tears are absolutely necessary to repentance, but they do very well become it; and a thorough sense of sin will almost melt the most hard and obdurate disposition, and fetch water out of a very Rock. To be sure the consideration of our ways should cause inward trouble and confusion in our minds. The least we can do, when we have done amiss, is to be sorry for it, to condemn our own folly, and to be full of indignation and displeasure against our selves for what we have done, and to resolve never to do the like again. And let us make sure that our trouble and sorrow for sin have this effect, *to make us leave our sins*; and then we shall need to be the less solicitous about the degrees and outward expressions of it.

3. *A serious consideration of the evil and unreasonableness of a sinful course.* That sin is the stain and blemish of our natures, the reproach of our reason and understanding, the disease and the deformity of our Souls, the great enemy of our peace, the cause of all our fears and troubles: That whenever we do a wicked action we go contrary to the clearest dictates of our reason and conscience, to our plain and true interest, and to the strongest ties and obligations of duty and gratitude. And which renders it yet more unreasonable, sin is a voluntary evil which men wilfully bring upon themselves. Other evils may be forced upon us, whether we will or no; but no man is wicked and vicious but by his own choice. How do we betray our folly and weakness by suffering our selves to be hurried away by every foolish lust and passion to do things which we know to be prejudicial and hurtful to our selves; and so base and unworthy in themselves that we are ashamed to do them, not only in the presence of a wise man, but even of a child or a fool? So that if sin were followed with no other punishment besides the guilt of having done a shameful thing, a man would not by intemperance make himself a fool and a beast; one would not be false and unjust, treacherous or unthankful, if for no other reason, yet out of mere greatness and generosity of mind, out of respect to the dignity of his nature, and out of very reverence to his own reason and understanding. For let witty men say what they will in defence of their Vices, there are so many natural acknowledgments of the evil and unreasonableness of sin that the matter is past all denial: Men are generally galled and uneasy at the thoughts of an evil action, both before and after they have committed it; they are ashamed to be taken in a Crime, and heartily vex'd and provok'd whenever they are upbraided with it; and 'tis very observable, that tho' the greater part of the World always was bad, and vice hath ever had more servants and followers to cry it up, yet never was there any Age so degenerate, in which Vice could get the better of Virtue in point of general esteem and reputation: Even they whose wills have been almost enslaved to sin, could never yet so far bribe and corrupt their understandings as to make them give full approbation to it.

4. *A due sense of the fearful and fatal consequences of a wicked life.* And these are so sad and dreadful, and the danger of them so evident and so perpetually

perually threatening us, that no temptation can be sufficient to excuse a man to himself and his own reason for venturing upon them. A principal point of wisdom is to look to the end of things; not only to consider the present pleasure and advantage of any thing, but also the ill consequences of it for the future, and to balance them one against the other.

Now sin in its own nature tends to make men miserable. It certainly causes trouble and disquiet of mind: And to a considerate man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater argument against sin than to consider that the forsaking of it is the only way to find rest to our souls.

Besides this, every vice is naturally attended with some particular mischief and inconvenience, which makes it even in this Life a punishment to it self; and commonly the Providence of God and his just Judgment upon Sinners strikes in to heighten the mischievous consequences of a sinful course. This we have represented in the Parable of the Prodigal; his riotous course of life did naturally and of it self bring him to want, but the providence of God likewise concurr'd to render his condition more miserable; *at the same time there arose a mighty Famine in the Land*; so that he did not only want wherewithal to supply himself, but was cut off from all hopes of relief from the abundance and superfluity of others. Sin brings many miseries upon us, and God many times sends more and greater than sin brings; and the farther we go on in a sinful course, the more miseries and the greater difficulties we involve our selves in.

But all these are but light and inconsiderable in comparison of the dreadful miseries of another World; to the danger whereof every man that lives a wicked life does every moment expose himself: So that if we could conquer shame, and had stupidity enough to bear the infamy and reproach of our vices, and the upbraidings of our consciences for them, and the temporal mischiefs and inconveniences of them; tho' for the present gratifying of our Lusts we could brook and dispense with all these, yet the consideration of the end and issue of a sinful course is an invincible objection against it, and never to be answered; tho' the violence of our sensual appetites and inclinations should be able to bear down all temporal considerations whatsoever, yet methinks the interest of our everlasting happiness should lie near our hearts; the consideration of another world should mightily amaze and startle us; the horrors of eternal darkness, and the dismal thoughts of being miserable for ever, shou'd effectually discourage any man from a wicked life. And this danger continually threatens the sinner, and may, if God be not merciful to him, happen to surprize him the next moment. And can we make too much haste to fly from so great and apparent a danger? When will we think of saving our selves, if not when (for ought we know) we are upon the very brink of ruin, and just ready to drop into destruction?

5. Upon this naturally follows a *full conviction of the necessity of quitting this wicked course*. And Necessity is always a powerful and over-ruling argument, and doth rather compel than persuade: and, after it is once evident, leaves no place for farther deliberation. And the greater the necessity is, it is still the more cogent argument. For whatever is necessary is so in order to some end, and the greater the end the greater is the necessity of the means without which that end cannot be obtain'd. Now the chief and last end of all reasonable Creatures is Happiness, and therefore whatever is necessary in order to that hath the highest degree of rational and moral necessity. We are not capable of happiness till we have left our sins; *for without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

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But tho Men are convinced of this necessity, yet this doth not always enforce a present change; because men hope they may continue in their sins, and remedy all at last by repentance. But this is so great a hazard in all respects that there is no venturing upon it. And in matters of greatest concernment wise men will run no hazards, if they can help it. *David* was so sensible of this danger, that he would not defer his repentance and the change of his life for one moment; *I thought on my ways and turned my Feet unto thy testimonies: I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. This day, this hour, for ought we know, may be the last opportunity of making our peace with God.* Therefore we should make hast out of this dangerous state, as *Lot* did out of *Sodom*, lest fire and brimstone overtake us. He, that cannot promise himself the next moment, hath a great deal of reason to seize upon the present opportunity. While we are *lingring* in our sins, if God be not merciful to us, we shall be consumed. Therefore *make haste, sinner, and escape for thy life, lest evil overtake thee.*

6. Lastly, *An apprehension of the possibility of making this change.* God, who designed us for happiness at first, and after we had made a forfeiture of it by sin, was pleased to restore us again to the capacity of it by the Redemption of our blessed Lord and Saviour, has made nothing necessary to our happiness that is impossible for us to do, either of our selves, or by the assistance of that grace which he is ready to afford us, if we heartily beg it of him. For that is possible to us which we may do by the assistance of another, if we may have that assistance for asking: And God hath promised to *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* So that notwithstanding the great corruption and weakness of our natures, since the grace of God, which brings salvation, hath appear'd, it is not absolutely out of our power to leave our sins and turn to God: For that may truly be said to be in our power which God hath promised to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our selves.

So that there is nothing on God's part to hinder this change. He hath solemnly declared that he sincerely desires it, and that he is ready to assist our good resolutions to this purpose. And most certainly when he tells us that *he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; that he would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:* He means plainly as he saith, and doth not speak to us with any private reserve or nice distinction between his secret and revealed will, that is, he doth not decree one thing and declare the contrary. So far is it from this, that if a sinner entertain serious thoughts of returning to God, and do but once move towards him, how ready is he to receive him! This is in a very lively manner described to us in the Parable of the *Prodigal Son*, who when he was returning home, and was yet a great way off, what haste doth his Father make to meet him? *he saw him and had compassion, and ran.* And if there be no impediment on God's part, why should there be any on ours? One would think all the doubt and difficulty should be on the other side, Whether God would be pleased to shew mercy to such great offenders as we have been: But the business doth not stick there. And will we be miserable by our own choice, when the Grace of God hath put it into our power to be happy? I have done with the first thing, the course which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.* I proceed to

II. *The success of this course.* It produced actual and speedy reformation. *I turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy*

Commandments. And if we consider the matter thoroughly and have but patience to reason out the case with our selves and to bring our thoughts and deliberations to some issue, the conclusion must naturally be the quitting of that evil and dangerous course in which we have lived. For sin and consideration cannot long dwell together. Did but men consider what sin is, they would have so many unanswerable Objections against it, such strong fears and jealousies of the miserable issue and event of a wicked life, that they would not dare to continue any longer in it.

I do not say that this change is perfectly made at once. A state of sin and holiness are not like two Ways that are just parted by a line, so as a man may step out of the one full into the other; but they are like two Ways that lead to two very distant places, and consequently are at a good distance from one another, and the farther any man hath travelled in the one the farther he is from the other; so that it requires time and pains to pass from the one to the other; It sometimes so happens, that some persons are by a mighty conviction and resolution, and by a very extraordinary and overpowering degree of God's grace, almost perfectly reclaimed from their sins at once, and all on a sudden *translated out of the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of his dear Son.* And thus it was with many of the first Converts to Christianity; as their prejudices against the Christian Religion were strong and violent, so the holy Spirit of God was pleased to work mightily in them that believed. But in the usual and settled methods of God's grace evil habits are mastered and subdued by degrees, and with a great deal of conflict, and many times, after they are routed, they rally and make head again; and 'tis a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any considerable degree of strength and maturity, and before a man come to that confirm'd state of goodness that he may be said to have conquer'd and mortified his lusts. But yet this ought not to discourage us, For, so soon as we have seriously begun this change, we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us; and if we pursue our advantages we shall every day gain ground, and the work will grow easier upon our hands; and we who moved at first with so much slowness and difficulty, shall after a while be enabled to run the ways of God's Commandments with pleasure and delight.

I have done with the two things I propound to speak to from these words, This *course* here prescribed, and the *success* of it. And now to persuade men to take this *course*, I shall offer two or three Arguments.

1. That Consideration is the proper act of Reasonable Creatures. This argument God himself uses, to bring men to a consideration of their evil ways, *Isa. 46. 8. Remember, and shew your selves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.* To consider our ways and to call our sins to remembrance, is to shew our selves men. 'Tis the great fault and infelicity of a great many, that they generally live without thinking, and are acted by their present inclinations and appetites without any consideration of the future consequences of things, and without fear of any thing but of a present and sensible danger; like Brute Creatures, who fear no evils but what are in view and just ready to fall upon them: Whereas to a prudent and considerate man a good or evil in reversion is capable of as true an estimation, proportionably to the greatness and distance of it, as if it were really present. And what do we think God has given us our reason and understandings for, but to foresee evils at a distance, and to prevent them; to provide for our future security and happiness, to look up to God our Maker, who hath taught us more
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than the Beasts of the earth. and made us wiser than the Fowls of heaven; but to consider what we do, and what we ought to do, and what makes most for our future and lasting interest, and what against it. What can a Beast do worse than to act without any consideration and design, than to pursue his present inclination without any apprehension of true danger? The most dull and stupid of all the brute Creatures can hardly exercise less reason than this comes to. So that for a man not to consider his ways is, to the very best intents and purposes, to be without understanding, and like the beasts that perish.

2. This is the end of God's patience and long-suffering towards us, to bring us to consideration; the great design of God's goodness is to lead men to repentance. He winks at the sins of men, that they may repent. He bears long with us, and delays the punishment of our sins, and doth not execute judgment speedily, because he is loth to surprize men into destruction, because he would give them the liberty of second thoughts, time to reflect upon themselves, and to consider what they have done, and to reason themselves into repentance. Consider this all ye that forget God, lest his patience turn into fury, and he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.

3. Consideration is that which we must all come to one time or other. Time will come when we shall consider and cannot help it, when we shall not be able to divert our thoughts from those things which we are now so loth to think upon. Our Consciences will take their opportunity to bring our ways to remembrance, when some great calamity or affliction is upon us. Thus it was with the Prodigal, when he was brought to the very last extremity, and was ready to perish with hunger, then he came to himself. When we come to die, then we shall think of our ways with trouble and vexation enough; and how glad wou'd we then be that we had time to consider them? And perhaps, while we are wishing for more time, Eternity will swallow us up. To be sure in the other world, a great part of the misery of wicked men will consist in furious reflexions upon themselves and the evil actions of their lives. 'Tis said of the Rich voluptuous man in the Parable, that in hell he lift up his eyes being in torment; as if he had never considered and bethought himself till that time. But alas! it will then be too late to consider; For then consideration will do us no good; it will serve to no other purpose but to aggravate our misery, and to multiply our stings, and to give new life and rage to those Vulturs which will perpetually prey upon our hearts. But how much a wiser course wou'd it be to consider these things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort; to think of them while we may redress them and avoid the dismal consequences of them, than when our case is desperate and past remedy?

And now what can I say more to persuade every one of us to a consideration of our own ways? We are generally apt to busy our selves in observing the errors and miscarriages of our neighbours, and are forward to mark and censure the faults and follies of other men; but how few descend into themselves, and turn their eyes inward, and say, *What have I done?* 'Tis an excellent saying of Antoninus the great Emperor and Philosopher, *No man was ever unhappy for not prying into the actions and conditions of other men, but that man is necessarily unhappy who doth not observe himself, and consider the state of his own soul.*

This is our proper work; and now is a proper season for it, when we pretend to God and men to set apart a solemn time for the examination of our selves, and for a serious review of our lives in order to humiliation and repentance, to the reforming and amendment of what is amiss. And tho we would venture to dissemble with men, yet let us not dissemble with God

God also; For shall not he that pondereth the heart consider it; and he that keepeth the soul, shall not he know it; and shall not he render to every man according to his ways?

I know it is a very unpleasant work which I am now putting you upon, and therefore no wonder that men are generally so backward to it; because it will of necessity give some present disturbance to their minds. They whose lives have been very vicious, are so odious a sight, so horrid a spectacle to themselves, that they cannot endure to reflect upon their own ways; of all things in the world they hate Consideration, and are ready to say to it as the evil Spirit did in the Gospel to our Saviour, *what have I to do with thee? Art thou come to torment me before the time?* But let not this affright us from it; for whatever trouble it may cause at present, it is the only way to prevent the anguish and the torments of Eternity.

The things which I have offer'd to your consideration are of huge moment and importance. They do not concern your Bodies and estates, but that which is more truly your selves, your immortal souls, the dearest and most durable part of our selves: and they do not concern us for a little while but for ever. Let me therefore bespeak your most serious regard to them in the words of *Moses* to the People of *Israel*, after he had set the Law of God before them, together with the blessings promised to obedience, and the terrible Curse threatned to the transgression of it, *Dent. 32. 46. Set your hearts to the words which I testify to you this day, for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life. Your life, your eternal life and happiness depends upon it.*

And besides a tender regard to your selves and your own interests, which methinks every man out of a natural desire of being happy, and dread of being miserable, should be forward enough to consider: Be pleas'd likewise to lay to heart the influence of your example upon others. I speak now to a great many persons, the eminence of whose rank and quality renders their examples so powerful, as to be able almost to give authority either to Virtue or Vice. People take their fashions from you, as to the habits of their minds as well as their bodies. So that upon you chiefly depends the ruin or reformation of manners, our hopes or despair of a better world. What way soever you go you are followed by troops. If you run any sinful or dangerous course, you cannot perish alone in your iniquity, but thousands will fall by your side, and ten thousands at your right hands: And on the contrary, 'tis very much in your power, and I hope in your wills and designs, to be the sovereign restorers of Piety and Virtue to a degenerate Age. It is our part indeed to exhort men to their duty, but 'tis you that would be the powerful and effectual preachers of righteousness. We may endeavour to make men profelytes to virtue, but you would infallibly draw disciples after you: We may try to persuade, but you could certainly prevail, either to make men good, or to restrain them from being so bad.

Therefore consider your ways, for the sake of others as well as your selves. Consider what you have done, and then consider what is fit for you to do, and if you do it not, what will be the end of these things. And to help you forward in this work it is not necessary that I should rip up the vices of the Age, and set mens sins in order before them. It is much better that you your selves should call your own ways to remembrance. We have every one a faithful Monitor and Witness in your own breasts, who, if we will but hearken to him, will deal impartially with us, and privately tell us the errors of our lives. To this Monitor I refer you, and to the grace of God to make these admonitions effectual.

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Let us then every one of us, in the fear of God, *search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.* Let us take to ourselves words, and say to God with those true Penitents in Scripture, *I have sinned, what shall be done unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I will abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.* For surely it is meet to be said unto God, *I will not offend any more; that which I know not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity I will do no more.* O that there were such an heart in us! O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end! And God of his infinite mercy inspire into every one of our hearts this holy and happy resolution, for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever, *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XIV.

The Folly and Danger of Irresolution and Delaying.

PSAL. CXIX. 60.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

IN the words immediately going before, you have the Course which David took for the reforming of his life, and the success of that course, *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* A serious reflexion upon the past errors and miscarriages of his life produced the reformation of it. And you have a considerable circumstance added in these words that I have now read to you, that this reformation was speedy and without delay, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* Upon due consideration of his former life, and a full conviction of the necessity of a change, he came to a resolution of a better life, and immediately put this resolution in execution; and to declare how presently and quickly he did it, he expresses it both affirmatively and negatively, after the manner of the *Hebrews*, who when they would say a thing with great certainty and *Emphasis*, are wont to express it both ways, *I made haste and delayed not*; that is, I did with all imaginable speed betake my self to a better course.

And this is the natural effect of consideration; and the true cause why men delay so necessary a work is, because they stifle their reason and suffer themselves to be hurried into the embraces of present Objects, and do not consider their latter end, and what will be the sad issue and event of a wicked life. For if men would take an impartial view of their lives, and but now and then reflect upon themselves and lay to heart the miserable and fatal consequences of a sinful course, and think whither it will bring them at last, and that the end of these things will be death and misery: If the carnal and sensual person would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruin'd in the way that he is in, how many lie *slain and wounded in it, that it is the way to hell, and leads down to the chambers of death*, this would certainly give a check to him, and stop him in his course.

For it is not to be imagined but that *that* man who hath duly considered what sin is, the shortness of its pleasures, and the eternity of its punishment, should resolve immediately to break off his sins, and to live another kind of life, Would any man be intemperate and walk after the flesh, would any man be unjust or defraud or oppress his Neighbour, be prophane and live in the contempt of God and Religion, or allow himself in any wicked course whatsoever, that considers and believes a Judgment to come, and that because of these things the terrible vengeance of God will one day fall upon the Children of Disobedience? It is not credible that men who apply themselves seriously to the meditation of these matters, should venture to continue in so imprudent and dangerous a course, or could by any temptation what-

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soever be trained on one step farther in a Way that does so certainly and visibly lead to ruin and destruction.

So that my Work at this time shall be, to endeavour to convince men of the monstrous folly and unreasonableness of delaying the reformation and amendment of their lives; and to persuade us to resolve upon it, and having resolved, to set about it immediately and without delay; in imitation of the good man here in the Text, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* And to this end, I shall

First, Consider the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work, and shew the unreasonableness of them.

Secondly, I shall add some farther Considerations to engage us effectually to set about this Work speedily and without delay,

I. We will consider a little the reasons and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work; and not only shew the unreasonableness of them, but that they are each of them a strong reason and powerful Argument to the contrary.

1. Many pretend that they are abundantly convinced of the great necessity of leaving their sins and betaking themselves to a better course, and they fully intend to do so; only they cannot at present bring themselves to it, but they hope hereafter to be in a better temper and disposition, and then they resolve by God's grace to set about this work in good earnest, and to go through with it.

I know not whether it be fit to call this a Reason; I am sure it is the greatest cheat and delusion that any man can put upon himself. For this plainly shews that thou dost not intend to do this which thou art convinced is so necessary, but to put it off from day to day. For there is no greater evidence that a Man doth not really intend to do a thing, than when notwithstanding he ought upon all accounts and may in all respects better do it at present than hereafter, yet he still puts it off. Whatever thou pretendest, this is a mere shift to get rid of a present trouble. It is like giving good words and making fair promises to a clamorous and importunate creditor, and appointing him to come another day, when the man knows in his conscience that he intends not to pay him, and that he shall be less able to discharge the Debt then, than he is at present. Whatever reasons thou hast against reforming thy life now, will still remain, and be in as full force hereafter, nay probably stronger than they are at present. Thou art unwilling now, and so thou wilt be hereafter, and in all likelihood much more unwilling. So that this reason will every day improve upon thy hands, and have so much the more strength by how much the longer thou continuest in thy sins. Thou hast no reason in the world against the present time but only that 'tis *present*; why when *hereafter* comes to be *present*, the reason will be just the same. So that thy present unwillingness is so far from being a just reason against it, that 'tis a good reason the other way; because thou art unwilling now, and like to be so, nay more so hereafter; if thou intendest to do it at all, thou shouldst set about it immediately, and without delay.

2. Another reason which men pretend for the delaying of this Work, is the great difficulty and unpleasantness of it. And it cannot be denied but that there will be some bitterness and uneasiness in it, proportionably to the growth of evil habits, and the strength of our lusts, and our greater or less progress and continuance in a sinful course: So that we must make account of a sharp conflict, of some pain and trouble in the making of this change, that it will cost us some pangs and throes, before we be born again. For
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when nature hath been long bent another way, it is not to be expected that it should be reduced and brought back to its first straightness without pain and violence.

But then it is to be considered, that how difficult and painful soever this work be, it is necessary, and that should over-rule all other considerations whatsoever; that if we will not be at this pains and trouble, we must one time or other endure far greater than those which we now seek to avoid; that it is not so difficult as we imagine, but our fears of it are greater than the trouble will prove; if we were but once resolved upon the Work, and seriously engaged in it, the greatest part of the trouble were over; it is like the fear of children to go into the cold water, a faint trial increaseth their fear and apprehension of it, but so soon as they have plunged into it, the trouble is over, and then they wonder why they were so much afraid. The main difficulty and unpleasantness is in our first entrance into Religion; it presently grows tolerable, and soon after easie; and after that by degrees so pleasant and delightful, that the man would not for all the World return to his former evil state and condition of life.

We should consider likewise what is the true cause of all this trouble and difficulty; 'Tis our long continuance in a sinful course that hath made us so loth to leave it; 'Tis the custom of sinning that renders it so troublesome and uneasie to men to do otherwise: 'Tis the greatness of our guilt, heightened and inflamed by many and repeated provocations, that doth so gall our consciences and fill our souls with so much terror; 'Tis because we have gone so far in an evil way, that our retreat is become so difficult, and because we have delayed this work so long that we are now so unwilling to go about it; and consequently, the longer we delay it the trouble and difficulty of a change will increase daily upon us. And all these considerations are so far from being a good reason for more delays, that they are a strong argument to the contrary. Because the work is difficult now, therefore do not make it more so; and because your delays have increased the difficulty of it, and will do more and more, therefore delay no longer.

3. Another pretended encouragement to these delays, is the great mercy and patience of God. He commonly bears longer with sinners, and therefore there is no such absolute and urgent necessity of a speedy repentance and reformation of our lives. Men have not the face to give this for a reason, but yet for all that it lies at the bottom of many mens hearts: So Solomon tells us, *Eccles. 8. 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

But it is not always thus. There are few of us but have seen several instances of God's severity to sinners, and have known several persons surprized by a sudden hand of God, and cut off in the very act of sin without having the least respite given them, without time or liberty so much as to ask God forgiveness, and to consider either what they had done, or whither they were going. And this may be the case of any Sinner, and is so much the more likely to be thy case, because thou dost so boldly presume upon the mercy and patience of God.

But if it were always thus, and thou wert sure to be spared yet a while longer; what can be more unreasonable and disingenuous than to resolve to be evil because God is good; and, because he suffers so long, to sin so much the longer, and because he affords thee a space of repentance, therefore to delay it and put it off to the last? The proper design of God's goodness is to lead men to repentance, and he never intended his patience for an encouragement to men to continue in their sins, but for an opportunity and an argument to break them off by repentance. † These

These are the pretended reasons and encouragements to men to delay the repentance and the reformation of their lives, and you see how groundless and unreasonable they are ; which was the first thing I propounded to speak to.

II. I shall add some farther considerations, to engage men effectually to set about this work speedily, and without delay. And because they are many, I shall insist upon those which are most weighty and considerable, without being very curious and solicitous about the method and order of them : For, provided they be but effectual to the end of persuasion, it matters not how inartificially they are ranged and disposed.

1. Consider, that in matters of great and necessary concernment ; and which must be done, there is no greater argument of a weak and impotent mind than Irresolution ; to be undetermin'd, where the case is so plain, and the necessity so urgent ; to be always about doing that which we are convinced must be done.

Vituros agimus semper, nec vivimus unquam.

We are always intending to live a new life, but can never find a time to set about it. This is as if a man should put off eating and drinking and sleeping from one day and night to another, till he have starved and destroyed himself. It seldom falls under any man's deliberation, whether he should live or not, if he can chuse ; and if he cannot chuse, 'tis in vain to deliberate about it. It is much more absurd to deliberate, whether we should live virtuously or religiously, soberly or righteously in the world, for that upon the matter is to consult whether a man should be happy or not ; Nature hath determined this for us, and we need not reason about it ; and consequently, we ought not to delay that which we are convinced is so necessary in order to it.

2. Consider that Religion is a great and a long work, and asks so much time that there is none left for the delaying of it. To begin with Repentance, which is commonly our first entrance into Religion : This alone is a great work, and is not only the business of a sudden thought and resolution, but of execution and action : 'Tis the abandoning of a sinful course, which we cannot leave, till we have in some degree mastered our lusts ; for so long as they are our Masters, like *Pharaoh*, they will keep us in bondage and *not let us go to serve the Lord*. The habits of sin and vice are not to be pluck'd up and cast off at once ; as they have been long in contracting, so without a miracle it will require a competent time to subdue them and get the victory over them ; for they are conquered just by the same degrees that the habits of grace and virtue grow up and get strength in us.

So that there are several duties to be done in Religion, and often to be repeated ; many graces and virtues are to be long practised and exercised before the contrary vices will be subdued, and before we arrive to a confirmed and settled state of goodness ; such a state as can only give us a clear and comfortable evidence of the sincerity of our resolution and repentance, and of our good condition towards God. We have many lusts to mortify, many passions to govern and bring into order, much good to do, to make what amends and reparation we can for the much evil we have done : We have many things to learn ; and many to unlearn, to which we shall be strongly prompted by the corrupt inclinations of our nature, and the remaining power of ill habits and customs : and perhaps we have satisfaction and restitution to make for the many injuries we have done to others, in their persons,

sions, or estates, or reputations: In a word, we have a *body of sin* to put off, which clings close to us and is hard to part with: we have to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*; to increase and improve our graces and virtues; to *add to our faith knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and brotherly kindness, and charity*; and to *abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God*: We have to be useful to the world, and exemplary to others in a holy and virtuous conversation; our *light is so to shine before men, that others may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*.

And do we think all this is to be done in an instant, and requires no time? That we may delay and put off to the last, and yet do all this work well enough? Do we think we can do all this in time of sickness and old age, when we are not fit to do any thing; when *the spirit of a man can hardly bear the infirmities of nature*, much less a guilty conscience and a wounded spirit? Do we think that when the day hath been idly spent and squandered away by us, that we shall be fit to work when the night and darkness comes? When our understanding is weak, and our memory frail, and our will crooked, and by a long custom of sinning obstinately bent the wrong way, what can we then do in Religion? What reasonable or acceptable service can we then perform to God? When our candle is just sinking into the socket, how shall *our light so shine before men, that others may see our good works*?

Alas! the longest life is no more than sufficient for a man to reform himself in, to repent of the errors of his life, and to amend what is amiss: to put our souls into a good posture and preparation for another world, to train up our selves for eternity, and to make our selves *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light*.

3. Consider what a desperate hazard we run by these delays. Every delay of repentance is venturing the main chance. It is uncertain whether hereafter we shall have time for it; and if we have time, whether we shall have a heart to it, and the assistance of God's grace to go thorough with it. God indeed hath been graciously pleased to promise pardon to repentance; but he hath no where promised life and leisure, the aids of his grace and holy Spirit to those who put off their repentance; he hath no where promised acceptance to mere sorrow and trouble for sin, without *fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life*: He hath no where promised to receive them to mercy and favour who only give him good words, and are at last contented to condescend so far to him as to promise to leave their sins when they can keep them no longer. Many have gone thus far in times of affliction and sickness, as to be awakened to a great sense of their sins, and to be mightily troubled for their wicked lives, and to make solemn promises and professions of becoming better; and yet upon their deliverance, and recovery all hath vanished and come to nothing, and their *righteousness hath been as the morning-cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away*: And why should any man, merely upon account of a death-bed repentance, reckon himself in a better condition than those persons who have done as much and gone as far as he? and there is no other difference between them but this, that the repentance of the former was tried, and proved insincere, but the *death-bed repentance* never came to a trial, and yet for all that God knows whether it was sincere or not, and how it would have proved, if the man had lived longer. Why should any man for offering up to God the mere refuse and dregs of his life, and the days *which himself hath no pleasure in*, expect to receive the reward of eternal life and happiness at his hands?

But

But, tho we do not design to delay this work so long, yet ought we to consider that all delays in a matter of this consequence are extremely dangerous; because we put off a business of the greatest concernment to the future, and in so doing put it to the hazard whether ever it shall be done: For the future is as much out of our power to command, as it is to call back the time which is past. Indeed if we could arrest time and strike off the nimble wheels of his Chariot, and like *Joshua* bid the Sun stand still, and make Opportunity tarry as long as he had occasion for it; this were something to excuse our delay, or at least to mitigate or abate the folly and unreasonableness of it: But this we cannot do. It is in our power, under the influence of God's grace and holy Spirit to amend our lives now, but it is not in our power to live till to morrow; and who will part with an estate in hand, which he may presently enter upon the possession of, for an uncertain reversion; and yet thus we deal in the great and everlasting concerns of our souls; we trifle away the present opportunities of salvation, and vainly promise to our selves the future; we let go that which is in our power, and fondly dispose of that which is out of our power, and in the hands of God.

Lay hold then upon the present opportunities, and look upon every action thou dost, and every opportunity of doing any, as possibly thy last; for so it may prove, for any thing thou canst tell to the contrary. If a man's life lay at stake and he had but one throw for it, with what care and with what concernment would he manage that action? What thou art doing next may, for ought thou knowest, be for thy life and for all eternity. So much of thy life is most certainly past, and God knows thou hast yet done little or nothing towards the securing of thy future happiness: it is not certain how much or how little is remaining; therefore be sure to make the best use of that little which may be left, and wisely to manage the last stake.

4. Seeing the delay of Repentance doth mainly rely upon the hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, let us consider a little how unreasonable these hopes are, and how absurd the encouragement is which men take from them. To sin in hopes that hereafter we shall repent, is to do a thing in hopes that we shall one day be mightily ashamed of it, that we shall one time or other be heartily grieved and troubled that we have done it: It is to do a thing in hopes that we shall afterwards condemn our selves for it, and wish a thousand times we had never done it; in hopes that we shall be full of horror at the thoughts of what we have done, and shall treasure up so much guilt in our consciences as will make us a terror to our selves, and be ready to drive us even to despair and distraction. And is this a reasonable hope? Is this a fitting encouragement for a wise man to give to himself, to any action? And yet this is plainly the true meaning of mens going on in their sins, in hopes that hereafter they shall repent of them.

5. If you be still resolved to delay this business and put it off at present, consider well with your selves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the last, nor till sickness come and death make his approaches to you. This is next to madness to venture all upon such an after-game. 'Tis just as if a man should be content to be shipwrack'd, in hope that he shall afterwards escape by a plank, and get safe to shore. But I hope none are so unreasonable, yet I fear that many have a mind to put it off to old age, tho they do not care to say so. *Seneca* expostulates excellently with this sort of men; *Who shall ensure thy Life till that time? Who shall pass his word for thee, that the Providence of God will suffer all things to happen and fall out just as thou*
hast

hast designed and forecast them? art thou not ashamed to reserve the reliques of thy life for thyself, and set apart only that time to be wise and virtuous in, which is good for nothing? How late is it then to begin to live well when thy life is almost at an end? What a stupid forgetfulness is it of our mortality, to put off good resolutions to the fiftieth or sixtieth year of our age, and resolve to begin to do better at that time of life to which very few persons have reach'd?

But perhaps thou art not altogether so unreasonable, but desirest only to respite this work till the first heat of youth and lust be over, till the cooler and more considerate part of thy life come on; that perhaps thou thinkest may be the fittest and most convenient season. But still we reckon upon uncertainties, for perhaps that season may never be: However, to be sure it is much more in our power, by the assistance of God's grace, which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, to conquer our lusts now, and to resist the most heady and violent temptations to vice, than either to secure the future time, or to recover that which is once past and gone.

Some seem yet more reasonable, and are content to come lower, and desire only to put it off for a very little while. But why for a little while? Why till to morrow? To morrow will be as this day, only with this difference, that thou wilt in all probability be more unwilling and indisposed then.

So that there is no future time which any man can reasonably pitch upon. All delay in this case is dangerous, and as senseless as the expectation of the *Idiot* described by the *Poet*, who being come to the river-side and intending to pass over, stays till all the Water in the river be gone by, and hath left the channel a dry passage for him.

— at ille

Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

But the river runs, and runs, and will run; and if he should stay a thousand years will never be the nearer being dry. So that, if the man must go over, and there be a necessity for it (as there is for Repentance) the only wise resolution to be taken in this case, is to wade or swim over as well as he can, because the matter will never be amended by tarrying.

6. *Lastly*, Consider what an unspeakable happiness it is to have our minds settled in that condition, that we may without fear and amazement, nay with comfort and confidence expect death and judgment. Death is never far from any of us, and the general judgment of the world may be nearer than we are aware of; for of that day and hour knoweth no man. And these are two terrible things, and nothing can free us from the terror of them but a good conscience, and a good conscience is only to be had either by innocence, or by repentance and amendment of life. Happy man! who by this means is at peace with God, and with himself; and can think of death and judgment without dread and astonishment. For the sting of death is sin; and the terror of the great day only concerns those who lived wickedly and impenitently, and would not be persuaded, neither by the mercies of God, nor by the fear of his judgments, to repent and turn to him: But if we have truly forsaken our sins, and do sincerely endeavour to live in obedience to the Laws and Commands of God, the more we think of death and judgment, the greater matter of joy and comfort will these things be to us: For blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. Let us therefore, as soon as possibly we can, put our selves into this posture and preparation, according to that advice of our blessed Saviour, *Luke 12. 35, 36. Let your loins be girded about, and your Lamps burning, and ye your selves like unto men that wait for their Lord.*

And.

And now I hope that enough hath been said to convince men of the great unreasonableness and folly of these delays; nay I believe that most men are convinced of it by their own thoughts, and that their Consciences call them fools a thousand times for it: But, O that I knew what to say that might prevail with men and effectually persuade them to do that which they are so abundantly convinced is so necessary.

And here I might address my self to the several Ages of Persons. You that are *young*, and have hitherto been in a good measure innocent, may prevent the Devil, and by an early Piety give God the first possession of your souls; and by this means never be put to the trouble of so great and solemn a Repentance, having never been deeply engaged in a wicked life: You may do a glorious, I had almost said a meritorious thing, in cleaving stedfastly to God and resolving to serve him, when you are so importunately courted and so hotly assaulted by the Devil and the World. However, you may not live to be old; therefore upon that consideration begin the work presently, and make use of the opportunity that is now in your hands.

You that are grown up to *ripeness of years* and are in the full vigour of your age, you are to be put in mind that the heat and inconsiderateness of youth is now past and gone; that reason and consideration are now in their perfection and strength that this is the very age of prudence and discretion, of wisdom and wariness: So that now is the proper time for you to be serious, and wisely to secure your future happiness.

As for those that are *old*, they methinks should need no body to admonish them, that it is now high time for them to begin a new life, and that the time past of their Lives is too much to have spent in sin and folly. There is no trifling where men have a great work to do, and but little time to do it in. Your Sun is certainly going down and near its setting, therefore you should quicken your pace, considering that your Journey is never the shorter, because you have but little time to perform it in. Alas! man, thou art just ready to die, and hast thou not yet begun to live? Are thy passions and lusts yet unsubdued, and have they had no other mortification than what age hath given them? 'Tis strange to see how in the very extremities of old-age, many men are, as if they had still a thousand years to live; and make no preparation for death, tho' it dogs them at the heels and is just come up to them and ready to give them the fatal stroke.

Therefore let us not put off this necessary work of reforming our selves, in what part and age of our lives soever we be: *To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* Nay to day is with the latest to begin this Work; had we been wise we would have begun it sooner. 'Tis God's infinite mercy to us that it is not quite too late, that the day of God's patience is not quite expired, and the door shut against us. Therefore do not defer your repentance to the next solemn time, to the next occasion of receiving the blessed Sacrament: Do not say, I will then reform and become a new man, after *that* I will take leave of my lusts, and sin no more. For let us make what haste we can, we cannot possibly make too much.

—*properat vivere nemo satis.*

No man makes haste enough to be good, to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well. Be as quick as we will, life will be too nimble for us, and go on faster than our work does, and death will go nigh to prevent us and surprise us unawares.

Do,

Do, do, *sinner*; abuse and neglect thy self yet a little while longer, till the time of regarding thy soul and working out thine own salvation be at an end, and all the opportunities of minding that great concernment be slipped out of thy hands, never to be recovered, never to be called back again; no, not by the most earnest wishes and desires, by the most fervent prayers and tears; and thou be brought into the condition of *prophane Esau*, who, for once despising the Blessing, lost it for ever, *and found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

To conclude: Art thou convinced that thy eternal happiness depends upon following the Advice which hath now been given thee? Why then, do but behave thy self in this case, as thou and all prudent men are wont to do in matters, which thou canst not but acknowledge to be of far less concernment. If a man be travelling to such a place, so soon as he finds himself out of the way, he presently stops and makes toward the right way, and hath no inclination to go wrong any farther: If a man be sick, he will be well presently, if he can, and not put it off to the future: Most men will gladly take the first opportunity that presents it self, of being rich or great; every man almost catches at the very first offers of a great place or a good purchase, and secures them presently if he can; lest the opportunity be gone, and another snatch these things from him. Do thou thus so much more in matters so much greater. Return from the error of thy way; be well, save thy self, as soon as possibly thou canst. When happiness presents it self to thee, do not turn it off, and bid it come again to morrow. Perhaps thou may'st never be so fairly offered again, perhaps the day of salvation may not come again to morrow, nay perhaps to *thee* to morrow may never come. But if we were sure that happiness would come again, yet why should we put it off? Does any man know how to be safe and happy to day, and can he find in his heart to tarry till to morrow?

Now the God of all mercy and patience give every one of us the wisdom and grace to *know* and to *do*, in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes; for the sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory now and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON XV.

The distinguishing Character of a Good and a Bad Man.

I JOHN III. 20.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.

IT is certainly a matter of the greatest consequence to us, both in order to our present peace and future happiness, truly to understand our spiritual state and condition, and whether we belong to God and be his Children or not. And it is not so difficult as is commonly imagined to arrive at this knowledge, if we have a mind to it, and will but deal impartially with our selves; for the Text gives us a plain mark and character whereby we may know it, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

From which words I shall endeavour by God's assistance to lay men open to themselves, and to represent to every one of us the truth of our condition; and then leave it to the grace of God, and every man's serious consideration, to make the best use of it.

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter, to consider briefly the occasion of these words. And this will best appear by attending stedfastly to the main scope and design of this *Epistle*. And I think that no man that reads it with attention can doubt but that it is particularly designed against the impious Sect of the *Gnosticks*, who, as the *Fathers* tell us, sprang from *Simon Magus*, and pretended to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, from whence they had the name of *Gnosticks*; but notwithstanding this glittering pretence they did allow themselves in all manner of impious and vicious practices, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, as St. *Jude* speaks of them. And that St. *John* aims particularly at this sort of men, is very evident from the frequent and plain allusions throughout this *Epistle* to those Names and Titles which this Sect assumed to themselves, as Chap. 2. ver. 4. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* And ver. 9. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.* Which passages, and many more in this *Epistle*, do plainly refer to the pretences of this Sect to more than ordinary knowledge and illumination in the mysteries of Religion; notwithstanding they did so notoriously contradict these glorious pretences by the impiety of their lives, and particularly by their hatred and enmity to their Fellow Christians. For, as the ancient *Fathers* tell us, they pretended that whatever they did they could not sin. And this our *Apostle* intimates in the beginning of this *Epistle*, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive*

ceive our selves, and the truth is not in us. And they held it lawful to renounce Christianity to avoid persecution; and not only so, but also to join with the Heathen in persecuting the Christians; which seems to be the reason why the *Apostle* so often taxeth them for hatred to their Brethren, and calls them *Murderers*.

Now, to shew the inconsistency of these principles and practices with Christianity, the *Apostle* useth many Arguments, amongst which he particularly insisteth upon this, That nothing is more essential to a *Disciple of Christ* and a *Child of God* (by which Titles Christians were commonly known) than to abstain from the practice of all sin and wickedness; ver. 6. of this Chap. *Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*, (whatever Knowledge they might pretend to, it was evident they were destitute of the true knowledge of God and his Son *Jesus Christ*) and Ver. 7. *Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*; and Ver. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil*; and Ver. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*; let men pretend what they will, wickedness is a plain mark and character of one that belongs to the *Devil*; as on the contrary, righteousness is an evidence of a *Child of God*: *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, &c.*

I shall briefly explain the words, and then consider the matter contained in them.

By the *children of God*, and the *children of the Devil*, are meant good and bad men; it being usual in the phrase of Scripture to call persons or things which partake of such a nature or quality, the children of those who are eminently endued with that nature and disposition. Thus they who are of the faith of *Abraham*, and do the works of *Abraham*, are called *Abraham's children*: In like manner, those who in their dispositions and actions imitate God are called the *children of God*; and on the contrary, those that addict themselves to sin and impiety are counted of another race and descent; they resemble the *Devil* and belong to him as the Chief and Head of that Faction.

By *righteousness* is here meant universal goodness and conformity to the Law of God, in opposition to sin which is the transgression of that Law.

By being *manifest* is meant, that hereby good and bad men are really distinguished, so that every one that will examine his condition by this mark may know of which number he is, and to what Party he belongs.

I come now to the main argument contained in the words, which is to give us a certain character and mark of distinction between a good and bad man; *ὅτι τὴν, by this the children of God are manifest and the children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In the management of the following Discourse, I shall proceed in this method.

First, We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man which is here laid down, *Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew that by this mark every man may, with due care and diligence, come to the knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil.*

Thirdly, I shall enquire whence it comes to pass, that, notwithstanding this, so many persons are at so great uncertainty concerning their condition,

†

I. We

I. We will consider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man, which is here in the Text, *Whoever doth not righteousness is not of God*; which implies likewise on the contrary, that *whoever doth righteousness is of God*. Now in the strictest sense of this Phrase, he only who lives in all the commandments of God blameless can be said to *do righteousness*; But in this sense *there is none that doth righteousness, no, not one*; and consequently none could be the Children of God; but the Text supposes some to be so, and therefore by *doing righteousness* the *Apostle* must necessarily be understood to mean something that is short of perfect and unflinching obedience. So that the question is, What *doing of righteousness* is sufficient to denominate a man a *Child of God*, and to put him into a state of grace and favour with him?

And I do not intend nicely to state this matter. 'Tis not perhaps possible to be done, nothing being more difficult than to determine the very utmost bounds and limits of things, and to tell exactly and just to a point where the line of difference between Virtue and Vice, between the state of a good and bad man, is to be placed: And if it could be done, it would be of no great use; for I take it to be no part of my business to tell men how many faults they may have, and how little goodness, and yet be *the Children of God*: but rather to acquaint them what degrees of holiness and goodness are necessary to give men a clear and comfortable evidence of their good estates towards God, and then to persuade them, in order to their peace and assurance, to endeavour after such degrees.

Wherefore, to state the business so far as is necessary to give men a sufficient knowledge of their condition, I shall briefly consider who they are that in the *Apostle's* sense may be said to be *doers of righteousness*, or *not doers of it*. And because the *Apostle* lays down the Rule negatively, I shall therefore,

In the *first* place enquire who they are, that, in the *Apostle's* sense, may be said *not to do righteousness*.

1. They that live in the general course of a wicked life, in the practice of great and known sins, as injustice, intemperance, filthy and sensual lusts, prophane neglect and contempt of God and Religion, so that by the whole course and tenor of their actions it is plain beyond all denial that *there is no fear of God before their eyes*. Concerning these the case is very evident, that it seems too mild and gentle an expression, to call them *not doers of righteousness*.

2. They who live in the habitual practice of any one known sin, or in the neglect of any considerable part of their known duty. For any vicious habit denominates a man, and puts him into an evil state.

3. They who are guilty of the single act of a very heinous and notorious crime; as a deliberate act of blasphemy, of murder, perjury, fraud or oppression, or of any other crime of the like enormity. For tho' ordinarily one single act of sin doth not denominate one a bad man, when the general course of the man's life is contrary; yet the single acts of some sorts of sins are so crying and heinous, and do so stare every man's conscience in the face, that they are justly esteemed to be of equal malignity with vicious habits of an inferior kind; because they do almost necessarily suppose a great depravation of mind, and a monstrous alienation from God and goodness, in the person that deliberately commits them. And they, who are guilty in any of these three degrees now mentioned, are most certainly *not doers of righteousness*, and consequently it is *manifest* that they are *not the children of God*.

In the *second* place, I shall enquire who they are that in the *Apostle's* sense may be said to *do righteousness*. In short, they who in the general course of their lives do keep the Commandments of God. And thus the *Scripture* generally expresseth this matter, by *keeping the Commandments of God*, and by *having respect to all his Commandments*; by *obedience to the Gospel of Christ*; by being *holy in all manner of conversation*; by *abstaining from all kind of evil*; by *cleansing our selves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*; and by *practising holiness in the Fear of God*: To which I shall add the description which *St. Luke* gives us of the *righteousness* of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, *Luke* 1. 6. *They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. All which expressions do plainly signify the actual conformity of our lives and actions in the general course and tenor of them, to the Laws and Commands of God. And this implies these two things; That the tenor of our lives and actions be agreeable to these Laws of God: And that these actions be done with a sincere and upright mind; out of regard to God and another world, and not for low and temporal ends.

And I chuse rather to describe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general course of his actions to the Law of God, than (as some have done) by a sincere Desire or resolution of obedience. For a desire may be sincere for the time it lasts, and yet vanish before it comes to any real effect. And, how innocently so ever it was intended, it is certainly a great mistake in Divinity, and of very dangerous consequence to the souls of men, to affirm that a Desire of grace is grace; and consequently by the same reason, that a desire of obedience is obedience. A sincere desire and resolution to be good is indeed a good beginning, and ought by all means to be cherished and encouraged; but yet it is far enough from being the thing desired, or from being accepted for it in the esteem of God: For God never accepts the Desire for the deed, but where there is no possibility, no opportunity of doing the thing desired; but if there be, and the thing be not done, there is no reason to imagine that the desire in that cause should be accepted as if the thing were done. For instance, if a man give alms according to his ability, and would give more if he were able, in this case the desire is accepted for the deed. And of this case it is, and no other, that the *Apostle* speaks, *2. Cor.* 8. 12. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*. That is, God interprets and accepts the charity of men according to the largeness of their hearts, and not according to the straitness of their fortunes: But it is a great mistake to draw a general conclusion from this Text, that in all cases God accepts the will for the deed. For tho' a man sincerely desire and resolve to reform his life (as I doubt not many men often do) but do it not when there is time and opportunity for it, these desires and resolutions are of no account with God; all this *righteousness* is but as the morning-cloud, and as the early dew which passeth away. Men are not apt to mistake so grossly in other matters. No man believes hunger to be meat, or thirst to be drink; and yet there is no doubt of the truth and sincerity of these natural desires. No man thinks that covetousness, or a greedy desire to be rich, is an estate; or that ambition or an insatiable desire of honour is really advancement: Just so, and no otherwise, a desire to be good is righteousness. The *Apostle's* caution a little before the Text may fitly be applied to this purpose, *Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous*. Not but that the best of men do sometimes fall through infirmity and are betrayed by surprize, and born down by the violence of tempta-

temptation; but if the general course of our actions be a *doing of righteousness*, the grace of the Gospel, in and through the merits of our blessed Saviour, doth accept of this imperfect but sincere obedience.

II. I shall endeavour to shew, that by this mark every man may with due care and diligence, arrive at the certain knowledge of his spiritual state and condition. *By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* By which the Apostle means that this is a real mark of difference betwixt good and bad men, and that whereby they very often manifest themselves to others; especially when the course of their lives is eminently pious and virtuous, or notoriously impious and wicked. But because it doth not so much concern us curiously to enquire into, much less severely to censure the state of other men, I shall only consider at present how far by this mark and character every man may make a certain judgment of his own good or bad condition.

1. By this character, as I have explained it, he that is a bad man may certainly know himself to be so, if he will but consider his condition, and do not wilfully deceive and delude himself. As for those who are vicious in the general course of their lives, or have been guilty of the act of some heinous or notorious sin not yet repented of; their case is so plain for the most part, even to themselves, that they can have no manner of doubt concerning it. Such men stand continually convicted and condemned by the sentence of their own minds: and whenever they reflect upon themselves (which they do as seldom as they can) they are a *terror to themselves*, and full of amazement and fearful expectation of judgment. Not but that even in so plain a case many men do use great endeavours to cheat themselves and would be very glad to find out ways to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of Heaven, and to gain the favour, at least the forgiveness of God, without repentance and amendment of their lives. And to this end they are willing to confess their sins, and to undergo any Penance that should be imposed upon them, that only excepted which only can do them good, I mean, real reformation. And when the Priest hath absolv'd them, they would fain believe that God hath forgiven them too; however, they return to their former course, and being strongly addicted to their lusts, between stupidity and foolish hopes they at last come to this desperate resolution, to venture all upon the absolution of the Priest, *Et valeat quantum valere potest*, let it have what effect it can; tho I dare say that in their most serious thoughts they are horribly afraid it will do them no good.

And for those who are sinners of a lesser rate, and perhaps allow themselves only in one kind of vice, they likewise have reason to conclude themselves in a bad condition; especially if they consider that he who lives in the breach of any one Commandment of God is guilty of all, because he contemns that authority which enacted the whole Law. And 'tis easy for any man to discern the habit of any sin in himself; as when he frequently commits it, when he takes up no firm resolutions against it, when he useth no competent care to avoid the temptations to it, nor puts forth any vigorous endeavours to break off from it; or however, still continues in the practice of it. For the customary practice of any known sin is utterly inconsistent with sincere resolutions and endeavours against it, there being no greater evidence of the insincerity of resolutions and endeavours in any kind than still to go on to do contrary to them.

2. By this character likewise they that are sincerely good may generally be well assured of their good condition, and that they are *the children of God*.

God. And there are but two things necessary to evidence this to them ; That the general course and tenor of their actions be agreeable to the Laws of God ; and, That they be sincere and upright in those actions. And both these every man may sufficiently know concerning himself ; for if the Laws of God be plain, and lie open to every man's understanding, then it is as easy for every man to know when he obeys God and keeps his Commandments, as when he obeys the commands of his Father or his Prince, and when he keeps the known Laws of the Land. And no sensible or considerate man ever had any doubt of this kind ; for, if a man can know any thing he can certainly tell when he keeps or breaks any known Law ; so that all doubts of this nature are frivolous and idle pretences to cover mens faults, and such as they would be ashamed to alledge in any other case.

And a good man may likewise know when he obeys God sincerely. Not but that men often deceive themselves with an opinion, or at least a groundless hope of their own sincerity ; but if they will deal fairly with themselves, and use due care and diligence, there are very few cases (if any) wherein they may not know their own sincerity in any act of obedience to God : For what can a man know concerning himself, if not the reality of his own intentions ? if a man should in earnest tell me, that he doubted very much whether he had that friendship for me which he made profession of, and that he was afraid that his affection to me was not real and sincere, I confess I should doubt of it too ; because I should certainly conclude that no man could know that matter so well as he himself.

And there is no doubt but whoever hath a hearty kindness for another, and a sincere desire to serve and please him, knows he has it. And accordingly good and holy men in Scripture do every where with great confidence and assurance appeal to God concerning the integrity and sincerity of their hearts towards him. *Job* and *David*, *Hezekiah* and *Nehemiah* in the *Old Testament* ; and in the *New*, *St Paul* for himself and *Timothy*, makes this solemn profession of their sincerity, *2 Cor. 1. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have our conversation in the World.* And I cannot call to mind so much as any one passage in Scripture, from whence it can be collected that any good man ever doubted of his own sincerity. And to say the truth, it would not be modesty but impudence in any man to declare that he suspects himself of hypocrisy ; good men have always abhorred the thoughts of it. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job*, and yet he could not bear to have his integrity questioned. It was a brave and generous speech of his, *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

And yet it hath so happened that *this* is become a very common doubt among religious people, and they have been so unreasonably cherished in it as to have it made a considerable evidence of a man's sincerity to doubt of it himself. It is indeed said in Scripture, *Jer. 17. 9. That the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, who can know it ? which is true concerning our future intentions and actions : no man knowing how his mind may change hereafter. Little did *Hazael* think that ever he should do those things which the Prophet foretold him. But tho this be true in it self, yet 'tis not the meaning of that Text. For the Prophet in that chapter plainly makes use of this consideration of the falshood and deceitfulness of man's heart as an argument to take off the People of *Israel* from trusting in the arm of flesh, and in those promises which were made to them of foreign assistance from *Egypt* : Because men may pretend fair, and yet deceive those that rely upon them, for *the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked*,
and

and none but God knows whether mens inward intentions be answerable to their outward professions; *for he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins.* And this I verily believe is all that the *Prophet* here intends, That there is a great deal of fraud and deceit in the hearts of bad men, so that no man can rely upon their promises and professions; but God knows the hearts of all men. But now because God alone knows the hearts of all men and the sincerity of their intentions towards one another, doth it from hence follow that it is a thing either impossible or very difficult for any man to know the sincerity of his own present intentions and actions: to make any such conclusions were to *condemn the generation of God's children*, those holy and excellent men in Scripture, *Job*, and *David*, and *Hezekiah*, and *St. Paul*, who do frequently appeal to God concerning their own integrity. And surely when the Apostle saith, *No man knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him*, he plainly supposes that every man is conscious to the motions and intentions of his own mind. I have insisted the longer upon this, that I might from the very foundation destroy an imagination, which is not only untrue in it self, but has likewise been a very great hindrance to the peace and comfort of many good men.

III. Let us enquire whence it comes to pass, that notwithstanding this, so many persons are at so great uncertainty about their spiritual condition. For the clearing of this matter, we will distinctly consider these three things. *First*, The grounds of the false hopes and confidence of men really bad, concerning their good condition. *Secondly*, The causeless doubts and jealousies of men really good, concerning their bad condition. And *Thirdly*, The just causes of doubting in others. As for the troubles and fears of men who are notoriously bad, and live in the Practice of known vices, these do not fall under our consideration: If they be troubled about their condition, it is no more than what they ought to be; and if they be only doubtful of it, it is less than they ought to be. To persons in this condition there is only counsel to be given to leave their sins and become better, but no comfort to be administered to them till first they have followed that counsel: For, till they reform, if they think themselves to be in a bad condition, they think just as they ought, and as there is great reason, and no body should go about to persuade them otherwise.

First then, We will consider the grounds of the false hopes and confidence, of men really bad, concerning their good condition. I do not now mean the worst of men, but such as make some shew and appearance of goodness. It is very displeasing to men to fall under the hard opinion and censure of others, but the most grievous thing in the world for a man to be condemned by himself; and therefore it is no wonder that men use all manner of shifts to avoid so great an inconvenience as is the ill opinion of a man's self concerning himself and his own condition.

Some therefore rely upon the profession of the Christian Faith, and their being baptized into it. But this is so far from being any exemption from a good life, that it is the greatest and most solemn obligation to it. Dost thou believe the Doctrine of the Gospel? thou of all men art inexcusable, if thou allowest thy self in ungodliness and worldly lusts.

Others trust to their external Devotion, they frequent the Church, and serve God constantly, they pray to him, and hear his word, and receive the blessed Sacrament: But let us not deceive our selves, God is not mocked. All this is so far from making amends for the impiety of our lives, that on the contrary, the impiety of our lives spoils all the acceptance of our devo-

devotions. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law (that is, from obeying it) even his Prayer shall be an abomination.*

Others who are sensible they are very bad, depend very much upon their repentance, especially if they set solemn times apart for it. And there is no doubt but that a sincere repentance will put a man into a good condition: But then it is to be considered, that no repentance is sincere, but that which produceth a real change and reformation in our lives. For we have not repented to purpose if we return again to our sins. It is well thou art in some measure sensible of thy miscarriage, but thou art never safe till thou hast forsaken thy sins; thy estate and condition towards God is not changed, till thou hast really alter'd thy self and the course of thy Life.

Others satisfy themselves with the exercise of some particular graces and virtues, Justice, and Liberality, and Charity. And is it not a thousand pities that thy life is not all of a piece, and that all the other parts of it are not answerable to these, that thou should'st lose the reward of so much real goodness out of thy fondness to any one vice or lust, that when *thou art not far from the Kingdom of God, for lack of one or two things more thou should'st fall short of it?* Hast thou never heard what the Scripture saith, that *he who offends in one point is a transgressor of the whole Law?* To make a man a good man, all parts of goodness must concur, but any one way of wickedness is sufficient to denominate a man bad.

Lastly, Some who are very careful of their outward carriage and conversation, but yet are conscious to themselves of great secret faults and vices, when they can find no comfort from themselves and the testimony of their own consciences, are apt to comfort themselves in the good opinion which perhaps others have of them. But if we know our selves to be bad, and *our own hearts to condemn us*, it is not the good opinions of others concerning us which can either alter or better our condition. They may have reason for their charity, and yet thou none for thy confidence. Trust no body concerning thy self rather than thy self, because no body can know thee so well as thou mayest know thy self.

These, and such as these, are the hopes of the Hypocrite, which *Job* elegantly compares to the *Spiders web*, finely and artificially wrought, but miserably thin and weak; so that we our selves may see through them, and if we lay the least stress upon them, they will break. They are but pleasant dreams and delusions, which, whenever we are awaken'd to a serious consideration of our condition by the apprehensions of approaching death and judgment, will presently vanish and disappear; so the same *holy man* tells us, *Job 27. 8. What is the hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?*

Secondly, We will consider in the next place the causeless doubts and jealousies of men really good, concerning their bad condition. For as some are prone beyond all reason to delude themselves with vain hopes of their good condition, so others are apt as unreasonably to torment themselves with groundless fears and jealousies that their estate is bad. And of these doubts there are several occasions, the chief whereof I shall mention, by which we may judge of the rest that are of the like nature.

1. Some are afraid that they are reprobated from all eternity, and therefore they cannot be the *Children of God*. This is so unreasonable, that, if it were not a real cause of trouble to some persons, it did not deserve to be considered. For no man that sincerely endeavours to please God and to keep his Commandments, hath from Scripture the least ground to suspect any latent or secret decree of God against him that shall work his ruin. But whatever the

the decrees of God be concerning the eternal state of men, since they are secret to us, they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reason to think himself rejected of God, either from eternity, or in time, that does not find the marks of Reprobation in himself, I mean, an evil heart and life. By this indeed a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the present, but he hath no reason at all from hence to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever cast him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords to him the space and means of it, is a much plainer sign that God is willing and ready to have mercy on him than any thing else is, or can be, that God hath utterly cast him off. And therefore for men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God which are hid from us, and not by his word, which is *near us and in our hearts*, is as if a man wandering in the wide Sea, in a dark night, when the heaven is all clouded about, should yet resolve to steer his course by the stars which he cannot see, but only guess at, and neglect the Compass, which is at hand and would afford him a much better and more certain direction. This therefore is to be rejected as a fond and groundless imagination, and which ought to trouble no body, because no body doth nor can know any thing concerning it. *Moses* hath long since very well determined this matter, *Deut. 49. 29. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but these things which are revealed, belong unto us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.*

2. Good men are conscious to themselves of many frailties and imperfections, and therefore they are afraid of their condition. But God considers the infirmities of our present state, and expects no other obedience from us in order to our acceptance with him, but what this state of imperfection is capable of: And provided the sincere endeavour and general course of our lives be to please him and keep his Commandments, the terms of the Gospel are so merciful, that our frailties shall not be imputed to us, so as to affect our main state, and to make us cease to be the children of God. And tho' we may be guilty of many errors and secret sins which escape our notice and observation, yet it is not impossible for us to exercise such a repentance for these as will be available for their pardon. For we have to deal with a merciful God, who is pleased to accept of such an obedience and of such a repentance as we are capable of performing. Now there is a great difference between those sins which require a particular repentance before we can hope for the pardon of them, (as all great and deliberate and presumptuous sins do, which are never committed without our knowledge, and are so far from slipping out of memory, that they are continually flying in our faces, and we cannot forget them if we would) and sins of infirmity occasion'd by surprize and violence of temptation, through ignorance or inadvertency: For a general repentance, such as we every day exercise in our devotions and prayers to God, may suffice for these. I speak not this to hinder any from a more particular repentance of all their known failings, the more particular the better; but to remove the groundless fears and jealousies of men about their main estate and condition. And if any ask how I know that a general repentance will suffice for these kind of sins? I answer, because more than this in many cases is impossible; so that either we must rest satisfied that God will forgive them upon these terms, or conclude that they shall not be forgiven at all, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures: I say, in many cases, more than this is impossible, because sins of Ignorance, and those common errors and frailties of humane life, which *David* calls *secret sins*, are not particularly known to us when they are committed, and consequently it is impossible that we should particularly

cularly repent of them. And therefore in this case there can be no doubt but that God doth accept of a general repentance, as he did from *David* when he made that humble confession and prayer to him, *Psal. 19. 12. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret sins.*

3. They are afraid their obedience is not sincere, because it proceeds many times from fear and not always out of pure love to God. For answer to this : It is plain from Scripture that God propounds to men several motives and arguments to obedience, some proper to work upon their *fear*, as the threatnings of punishment ; some upon their *hope*, as the promises of blessing and reward ; others upon their *love*, as the mercies and forgiveness of God. From whence it is evident he intended they should all work upon us. And accordingly the Scripture gives us instances in each kind. *Noah moved with fear* obeyed God in preparing an Ark. *Moses had respect unto the recompence of reward.* *Mary Magdalen loved much.* And as it is hard to say, so it is not necessary to determine, just how much influence and no more each of these hath upon us : It is very well if men be reclaimed from their sins and made good by the joint force of all the considerations which God offers to us. To be sure love is the noblest and most generous principle of obedience, but fear commonly takes the first and fastest hold of us, and in times of violent temptation, is perhaps the best argument to keep, even the best of men, within the bounds of their duty.

4. Another cause of doubting in good men is, from a sense of their imperfect performance of the duties of Religion, and of the abatement of their affections towards God at some times. They have many wandring thoughts in prayer and other exercises of devotion, and they cannot for their life keep their minds continually intent on what they are about. This we should strive against as much as we can, and that is the utmost we can do ; but to cure this wholly is impossible, the infirmity of our nature and the frame of our minds will not admit of it : And therefore no man ought to question his sincerity, because he cannot do that which is impossible for men to do.

And then for the abatement of our affections to God and Religion at some times, this naturally proceeds from the inconstancy of mens tempers, by reason of which it is not possible that the best of men should be able always to maintain and keep up the same degree of zeal and fervour towards God. But our comfort is, that God doth not measure mens sincerity by the Tides of their affections, but by the constant bent of their resolutions and the general tenor of their life and actions.

5. Another cause of these doubts is, that men expect more than ordinary and reasonable assurance of their good condition ; some particular revelation from God, an extraordinary impression upon their minds to that purpose, which they think the Scripture means by the *testimony* and *seal* and *earnest of the Spirit*. God may give this when and to whom he pleases, but I do not find he hath any where promised it. And all that the Scripture means by those phrases of the *testimony* and *seal* and *earnest of the Spirit*, is to my apprehension no more but this, That the Holy Spirit which God bestowed upon Christians in so powerful and sensible a manner was a *seal* and *earnest* of their resurrection to eternal life, according to that plain Text, *Rom. 8. 11. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* But then, who they are that have the Spirit of God, is only to be known by the real fruits and effects of it. If we be led by the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, then the Spirit of God dwelleth in us. But this is very far from an immediate and

and extraordinary revelation from the Spirit of God to the minds of good men, telling them in particular that they are the Children of God. I know not what peculiar favour God may shew to some, but I know no such thing, nor ever yet met with any wise and good man that did affirm it of himself: And I fear that in most of those who pretend to it, it is either mere fancy, or gross delusion.

6. As for the case of *melancholy*, it is not a reasonable case, and therefore doth not fall under any certain rules and directions. They, who are under the power of it, are seldom fit to take that counsel which alone is fit to be given them, and *that* is, not to believe themselves concerning themselves, but to trust the judgment of others rather than their own apprehensions. In other cases every man knows himself best, but a melancholy man is most in the dark as to himself. This cause of trouble and doubting is very much to be pitied, but hard to be removed, unless by Physick, or by time, or by chance. One may happen to say something that may hit the humour of a melancholy man, and satisfy him for the present; but reason must needs signify very little to those persons, the nature of whose distemper is, it to turn every thing that can be said for their comfort, into objections against themselves.

Thirdly, But besides those who mistake their condition either by presuming it to be better, or fearing it to be worse than it is, there are likewise others who upon good grounds are doubtful of their condition, and have reason to be afraid of it: Those I mean, who have some beginnings of goodness, which yet are very imperfect. They have good resolutions, and do many things well, but they often fall and are frequently pull'd back by those evil inclinations and habits which are yet in a great measure unsubdued in them. These I cannot liken better than to the *Borderers* between two Countries, who live in the marches and confines of two powerful Kingdoms, both which have a great influence upon them, so that it is hard to say whose Subjects they are, and to which Prince they belong: Thus it is with many in Religion, they have pious inclinations, and have made some fair attempts towards goodness, they have begun to refrain from sin and to resist the occasions and temptations to it; but ever and anon they are mastered by their old lusts, and carried off from their best resolutions; and perhaps, upon a little consideration, they repent and recover themselves again, and after a while are again entangled and overcome.

Now the case of these persons is really doubtful both to themselves and others. And the proper direction to be given them in order to their peace and settlement, is by all means to encourage them to go on and fortify their resolutions; to be more vigilant and watchful over themselves, to strive against sin and to resist it with all their might. And, according to the success of their endeavours in this conflict, the evidence of their good condition will every day clear up and become more manifest; the more we grow in grace, and the seldomer we fall into sin, and the more even and constant our obedience to God is, so much the greater and fuller satisfaction we shall have of our good estate towards God: *For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day: And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*

I shall only make two or three Inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this Argument, and so conclude.

1. From hence we learn the great danger of sins of Omission as well as Commission; *Whoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* The mere neglect of any of the great duties of Religion, of Piety towards God, and

of Kindness and Charity to Men, tho we be free from the commission of great sins, is enough to cast us out of the favour of God and to shut us for ever out of his Kingdom. *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not; therefore depart ye cursed.*

2. It is evident from what hath been said, That nothing can be vainer than for men to live in any course of sin and impiety, and yet to pretend to be the children of God, and to hope for eternal life. The Children of God will do the works of God, and whoever hopes to enjoy him hereafter, will endeavour to be like him here; *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as He is pure.*

3. You see what is the great mark and character of a man's good or bad condition; *whosoever doth righteousness is of God, and whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.* Here is a plain and sensible evidence by which every man, that will deal honestly with himself, may certainly know his own condition: and then, according as he finds it to be, may take comfort in it, or make haste out of it. And we need not ascend into heaven, nor go down into the deep, to search out the secret counsels and decrees of God; there needs no anxious enquiry whether we be of the number of God's Elect: If we daily mortify our lusts, and grow in goodness, and take care to add to our faith and knowledge, temperance and patience and charity and all other Christian graces and virtues, we certainly take the best course in the world to *make our calling and election sure.* And without this it is impossible that we should have any comfortable and well-grounded assurance of our good condition. This one mark of *doing righteousness* is that into which all other signs and characters which are in Scripture given of a good man, are finally resolved; And this answers all those various Phrases which some men would make to be so many several and distinct marks of a *Child of God*; as, whether we have the true knowledge of God and divine illumination, for *hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments*: whether we sincerely love God, for *this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments*: and whether God loves us, for *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance will behold the upright*: whether we be regenerate and born of God, for *whosoever is born of God sinneth not*: whether we have the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, for *as many as have the Spirit of God are led by the Spirit, and by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh*: whether we belong to Christ, and have an interest in him or not, for *they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof*: In a word, whether the promise of heaven and eternal life belong to us, for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, but if we have our fruits unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life. So that you see at last, the Scripture brings all to this one mark, holiness and obedience to the Laws of God, or a vicious and wicked life; *In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

Let us then deal impartially with our selves, and bring our lives and actions to this trial, and never be at rest till the matter be brought to some issue, and we have made a deliberate judgment of our condition, whether we be the *Children of God* or not: And if upon a full and fair examination our consciences give us this testimony, that by the grace of God we have *denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, and have lived soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*, we may take joy and comfort in it; for if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God: But if upon the search

search and trial of our ways our case appear clearly to be otherwise, or if we have just cause to doubt of it, let us not venture to continue one moment longer in so uncertain and dangerous a condition. And if we desire to know the way of Peace, the Scripture hath set it plainly before us, *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord, tho your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Tho our case be very bad, yet it is not desperate; *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:* And he is still willing to save us, if we be but willing to leave our sins and to serve him in holiness and righteousness the remaining part of our lives. We may yet be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: We who have ventured so long upon the brink of ruin, may yet by the infinite mercies of God, and by the power of his Grace, be rescued from the base and miserable slavery of the Devil and our lusts into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

And thus I have endeavoured, with all the plainness I could, to represent every man to himself, and to let him clearly see what his condition is towards God: and how the case of his soul and of his eternal happiness stands. And I do verily believe that what I have said in this matter is the truth of God, to which we ought all gladly to yield and render up our selves. For great is Truth, and mighty above all things: She is faithful and impartial in her counsels, and tho' she be not always welcome, yet 'tis always wise to hearken to her, for in great kindness and charity she lets men know their condition and the danger of it, that they may take care to prevent it: *With her is no accepting of persons, and in her judgment there is no unrighteousness.* I will conclude all with that excellent advice of a Heathen Philosopher. *Make it no longer a matter of dispute what are the marks and signs of a good man, but immediately set about it, and endeavour to become such a one.*

Antonin.
lib. 10.

S E R M O N XVI.

Of the Joy which is in Heaven at the Repentance
of a Sinner.

LUKE XV. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

After many attempts made in vain to reclaim Sinners from their evil ways and to bring them to the wisdom of the just, it is hard for us, who are messengers of God to men, not to sit down in despondence, and at last quite to despair of doing good upon them. But when I consider the infinite patience of God with Sinners, and how long *his Spirit strives with them*, why should we, *we* who are Sinners our selves, think much to bear with Sinners, and patiently to contend with their obstinacy and perverseness? When I consider that our blessed Saviour, the great Preacher and Pattern of Righteousness, did not give over the worst of men nor despair of their recovery: this methinks should make us, who are *Ambassadors for Christ*, unwearied in beseeching men in his stead to be reconciled to God.

And of this we have a famous instance in this Chapter: The *Publicans* and Sinners, as they had done several times before, came to hear our Saviour: He treated them very kindly, and conversed familiarly with them; at this the *Pharisees* were displeased and murmured, and this unreasonable murmuring of theirs gave occasion to the three *Parables* in this Chapter.

In which our Saviour does at once answer the Objection of the *Pharisees*, and give all possible encouragement to the repentance of these great Sinners. He answers the *Pharisees* by letting them plainly see, that he was about the best work in the world, the most acceptable to God, and matter of greatest joy to all the heavenly Inhabitants. Instead of a severe Reproof of their uncharitableness he offers that calmly to their consideration, which ought in all reason to convince them, that he was no ways to blame for this familiar conversation of his with Sinners, having no other design upon them but to reclaim them from their Vices, and to make them fit company for the best of Men; that he was a Spiritual Physician, and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his Patients. And then instead of terrifying these Sinners, who seemed to come with a good mind to be instructed by him, he gently insinuates the most winning arguments and the greatest encouragement to Repentance; by shewing how ready God was, after all their sins and provocations, to receive them to his grace and favour, provided they did sincerely repent and betake themselves to a better course: And not only so, but that the repentance of a sinner is a great joy to the great King
of

of the World, and to all that holy and heavenly Host that attend upon Him.

From which method of our Saviour in treating so great Sinners so gently, I cannot but make this observation, for my own use as well as for others; That it is good to give, even the greatest of Sinners, all the encouragement we can to repentance; and tho men have been never so bad, yet if they have but this one good quality left in them, that they are patient to be instructed, and content to hear good counsel, we should use them kindly and endeavour to recover them by the fairest means; not so much upbraiding them for their having been bad, as encouraging them to become better.

To this purpose our Saviour uttered three Parables; of the recovery of a lost sheep; of finding a lost piece of money; of the return of a prodigal son to his father; and tho they all aim at the same scope and design, yet our Saviour useth this variety, not only to convey the same thing to several capacities in a more acceptable manner, one similitude happening to hit one person, and another another, but likewise to inculcate so weighty a matter the more upon his hearers, and to fix it more deeply in their minds.

The words which I have read are the Moral or application of the first Parable, concerning a man who had an hundred sheep, and having lost one leaves the ninety and nine to go to seek that which was lost; and having found it, with great joy brings it home. By which our Saviour gives us to understand, what joy God and the blessed Spirits above take in the conversion of a sinner. *I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance* Than which nothing cou'd have been more proper, both to silence the uncharitable murmuring of the Pharisees against our Saviour for conversing with Publicans and Sinners, to so good an end, and likewise to encourage sinners to repent: For why should the Pharisees be displeased at that which was so great a pleasure to God and the holy Angels? and what greater encouragement to repentance than this; that God is not only willing to receive the returning sinner, but that the news of his repentance is entertain'd in Heaven with so much joy, that if it be possible for the blessed Inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happiness, this will be a new accession to it?

There are three things in the words which require a very careful explication.

1. How we are to understand the joy that is in Heaven at the conversion of a sinner.

2. Who are here meant by the just persons that need no repentance?

3. With what reason is it here said, that there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?

There is something of difficulty in each of these, which deserve our heedful and attentive consideration.

I. How we are to understand the joy that is in Heaven at the repentance of a sinner? And this (as indeed this whole passage of our Saviour's) we are not to understand too strictly and rigorously, but as spoken in a great measure, after the manner of men, and by way of accommodation to our capacity, so far as the persons here spoken of are capable of any addition to their joy and happiness.

As it refers to God, it seems very inconsistent with the happiness and perfection of the Divine Nature to suppose Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief or any other passion. Because this would be to imagine some new accession to his pleasure and happiness, which being always infinite,

nite, can never have any thing added to it. And therefore we are to understand this, as it relates to God, in the same manner as we do infinite other passages of Scripture where humane passions are ascribed to him, to be spoken by way of condescension and after the language and manner of the sons of men; and to signify only thus much to us, that the conversion of a sinner is a thing highly pleasing and acceptable to God.

As it refers to *Angels* and other *Blessed Spirits*, I see no inconvenience why it may not be understood more strictly and literally; that they conceive a new joy at the news of a sinner's repentance, and find a fresh pleasure and delight springing up in their minds, when ever they hear the joyful tidings of a sinner rescued from the slavery of the Devil and the danger of eternal damnation; of a new member added to the Kingdom of God, that shall be a companion and a sharer with them in that blessedness which they enjoy. There seems to me to be nothing in this repugnant to the nature and happiness of blessed Spirits in another world. For it is certain, that there are degrees of happiness among the blessed: from whence it necessarily follows, that some of them may be happier than they are. And it is very probable, since the happiness of Angels and good men is but finite, that those who are most happy do continually receive new additions to their blessedness; and that their felicity is never at a stand, but perpetually growing and improving to all eternity; and that as their knowledge and love do increase, so likewise the capacity and causes of their happiness are still more and more enlarged and augmented: So that it is reasonable enough to suppose that there is really Joy, among the Angels and Spirits of just men made perfect, over every sinner that repenteth.

II. Who are here meant by the *just persons who need no repentance*? That our Saviour in this expression gives some glance and reflexion upon the *Pharisees* (who prided themselves in their own righteousness, and, instead of confessing their sins to God, stood upon their own justification, as if they needed no repentance) is very probable; because this parable was designed to answer their murmurings against him, for conversing with Publicans and Sinners, and by the bye to give a check to those who were so conceited of their own righteousness as if they had no need of repentance. And this is very suitable to what our Saviour elsewhere says to them upon the like occasion, that *the whole have no need of the Physician, but the sick; that he came not to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance*. But yet, tho our Saviour expresseth himself so as that the *Pharisees* might with reason enough apply it to themselves, that there was more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine of *them*, who were so conceited of their own righteousness that they thought they had no need of repentance (for indeed our Saviour delivers himself so, as to leave room for such a severe application) yet I think there is but little doubt to be made but that he intended something farther; and that supposing the *Pharisees* were as just as they pretended, and were really righteous men, so as to stand in no need of such a repentance as great sinners do, yet our Saviour affirms, *there was more joy in Heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine such just persons*.

But are there any persons in the world so just, as absolutely to stand in need of no repentance? No, there was never any such person in the world, him only excepted who said this, our blessed Saviour, *who had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. And therefore this Phrase of *needing no repentance* is to be understood in a qualified sense, and with some allowance; otherwise our blessed Saviour had supposed a case which never was, of a great number of perfectly righteous men. And our Saviour's meaning in this

is sufficiently explained in the last Parable of this Chapter, concerning the *Prodigal Son*; where the prodigal son is the *sinner that repented*; and his elder Brother, who had always observed and obeyed his father, he is the *just person who needed no repentance*. So that by him our Saviour plainly designs those who being religiously educated, and brought up in the fear of God, had never broke out into any extravagant and vicious course of life, and so in some sense had no need of repentance, that is, of changing the whole course of their lives, as the prodigal son had. Not but that the best of men are guilty of many faults and infirmities, which they have too much cause to repent of, as our Saviour sufficiently intimates in that *Parable*: For certainly it was no small infirmity in the elder brother to be so envious, and to take so heinously the joyful welcome and entertainment which his prodigal brother at his return found from his father: But yet this single fault and sudden surprize of passion, considering the constant duty which he had paid to his father throughout the course of his life, did not make him such a sinner as to need such a repentance as his brother did, which consisted in a perfect change of the whole course of his life. And such *just persons* as these, and of such a *repentance* as this, it seems very plain that our Saviour intended this discourse.

III. But the main difficulty of all is, with what reason it is here said that *there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance*? Is it not better not to offend, than to sin and repent? Is not innocence better than amendment, and the wisdom of prevention to be preferred before that of remedy? Is it worth the while to do amiss, to make way for repentance? and is not this almost like *finning that grace may abound*? And if repentance be not better than righteousness, why is there more joy in Heaven over the penitent than over the righteous; nay over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine just persons? Do not the blessed always rejoice most in that which is really best? Here is the difficulty, and it requires some care and consideration clearly to remove it. In order to which be pleased to consider these *three things*, which I think to be very material to the clearing of it.

1. That the same thing considered in several respects, may in some respects have the advantage of another thing and for those reasons be preferred before it, and yet not have the advantage of it absolutely and in all respects. Moral comparisons are not to be exacted to a Mathematical strictness and rigor. To this purpose I have observed in a former discourse, that it was long since judiciously noted by *Aristotle*, "That moral and proverbial" speeches are not to be taken too strictly, as if they were universally true "and in all cases: It is sufficient if they be true for the most part, and in several respects which are very considerable. And of this nature are most of the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and whosoever shall go about to make out the truth of them in all cases, does in my opinion take a very hard task upon himself. But which is nearer to my purpose, our Saviour himself in the Chapter before my Text, and in the moral application of a Parable too, (namely that of the *unjust steward*) useth a proverbial speech just in the same manner; *The Children of this world are in their generation wiser than the Children of light*: Which is only a wise observation that is generally true and in many respects, but not absolutely and universally. For some men have been as wise and diligent for the glory of God and interest of their souls, as ever any man was for this world, and for the advancement of his temporal interest. Of the like nature is this saying used by our Saviour, probably taken (as our Saviour did many other proverbial Speeches) from the *Jews*, and applied to his own purpose. For there are several sayings of the *Jewish Masters* much

to this purpose: As, *Great is the dignity of penitents, Great is the virtue of them that repent, so that no creature may stand in their rank and order.* And again, *The righteous may not stand in the same place with those that have repented.* These I confess were very high sayings, but yet very well designed for the encouragement of repentance. And they are not without good reason, as will appear if we consider these two things.

First, That the greater the difficulty of virtue is, so much the greater is the praise and commendation of it: And not only we our selves take the more joy and comfort in it, but it is more admirable and delightful to others. Now it cannot be denied to be much more difficult to break off a vicious habit, than to go on in a good way which we have been trained up in, and always accustomed to. Those that have been well educated have great cause to thank God, and to acknowledge the care of their Parents and Teachers: For piety and goodness are almost infinitely easier to such persons, than to those who have wanted this advantage. It is happy for them they never tasted of unlawful pleasures; if they had, they would possibly have drunk as deep as others: It is well they were never entangled in a sinful course, nor enslaved to vicious habits, nor *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; if they had, they might possibly never have been recovered out of the snare of the Devil. By the happiness of a good education, and the merciful providence of God, a great part of many mens virtue consists in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good customs they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than in their resolute constancy in that which is good. And God who knows what is in man, and sees to the bottom of every man's temper and inclination, knows how far this man would have fallen, had he had the temptations of other men; and how irrecoverably perhaps he would have been plunged in an evil course, had he once entred upon it. So that repentance is a very great thing; and tho it be the most just, and fit and reasonable thing in the world, yet for all that it deserves great commendation, because it is for the most part so very hard and difficult. And therefore tho absolutely speaking, innocence is better than repentance, yet as the circumstances may be, the virtue of some penitents may be greater than of many just and righteous persons.

Secondly, There is this consideration farther to recommend Repentance, that they who are reclaim'd from a wicked course are many times more thoroughly and zealously good afterwards: Their trouble and remorse for their sins does quicken and spur them on in the ways of virtue and goodness, and a lively sense of their past errors is apt to make them more careful and conscientious of their duty, more tender and fearful of offending God, and desirous, if it were possible, to redeem their former miscarriages by their good behaviour for the future. Their love to God is usually more vehement and burns with a brighter flame, *for to whomsoever much is forgiven they will love much.* And they are commonly more zealous for the conversion of others, as being more sensible of the danger sinners are in and more apt to commiserate their case, remembering that it was once their own condition and with what difficulty they were rescued from so great a danger. And for the most part great penitents are more free from pride and contempt of others, the consideration of what themselves once were being enough to keep them humble all their days. So that penitents are many times more thoroughly and perfectly good, and after their recovery do in several respects outstrip and excel those who were never engaged in a vicious course of life: As a broken bone that is well set is sometimes stronger than it was before.

2. It will conduce also very much to the extenuating of this difficulty, to consider that our Saviour does not here compare repentance with absolute innocence and perfect righteousness, but with the imperfect obedience of good men, who are guilty of many sins and infirmities; but yet upon account of the general course and tenor of their lives are by the mercy and favour of the Gospel esteemed just and righteous persons; and, for the merits and perfect obedience of our blessed Saviour, so accepted by God. Now this alters the case very much, and brings the penitent and this sort of righteous persons much nearer to one another: so that in comparing them together, the true penitent may in some cases, and in some respects, have the advantage of the righteous, and deserve upon some accounts to be preferred before him.

3. Which is principally to be considered, for the full clearing of this difficulty; this passage of our Saviour is to be understood as spoken very much after the manner of men, and suitably to the nature of human passions, and the usual occasions of moving them. We are apt to be exceedingly affected with the obtaining of what we did not hope for, and much more with regaining of what we look'd upon as lost and desperate. Whatever be the reason of it, such is the nature of man, that we are not so sensibly moved at the continuance of a good which we have long possess'd, as at the recovery of it after it was lost and gone from us. And the reasons of a judicious value and esteem of a settled pleasure and contentment are one thing, and the causes of sudden joy and transport another. A continued course of goodness may in it self be more valuable, and yet repentance after a great fall and long wandrings may be much more moving and surprizing. For where things are constant and keep in the same tenor, they are not apt in their nature to give any new and sudden occasion of joy. And this is the reason given in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*; where the Father tells his eldest Son, who was so offended at the joyful reception and welcome of his prodigal Brother, That *He had been always with him, and all that he had was his*; That is, he was sensible of his constant duty and obedience, than which nothing could have been more acceptable; and that it had not, nor should not lose its reward: But the return of his other Son, after he had given over all hopes of him, and looked upon his case as desperate, this was a marvellous surprize and a happiness beyond expectation, which is the proper and natural cause of joy and gladness: And therefore he tells him that upon such an occasion *it was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.* His elder Son's continuance in his duty was the enjoyment of what he had alway had, but the return of his prodigal Son was the retrieving of what he had given up for lost, and a kind of resurrection from the dead. And thus our blessed Saviour, to encourage the repentance of sinners, represents God after the manner of men; as if our heavenly Father did conceive such a joy upon the repentance of a sinner as earthly parents are wont to do upon the return of a wild and extravagant Son to himself and his duty.

Having thus, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained the several difficulties in the Text, I shall now deduce some Inferences from it, and so conclude.

1. *First*, That the blessed Spirits above have some knowledge of the affairs of men here below, because they are said to rejoice at the conversion of a sinner. This is spoken more particularly of the *Angels*, as appears by comparing what is more generally said in the Text, that *there is joy in heaven*, with what is more particularly express'd in the 10th verse, that *there is*

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joy

joy in the presence of the *Angels* over one sinner that repenteth. Now whether the *Angels* come to this knowledge by virtue of their ministry here below for the good of the *Elect*, and so, in their continual intercourse between heaven and earth, bring to their fellow-servants in heaven the joyful news of the repentance of sinners upon earth; or whether God be pleased from time to time to reveal it to them, as a thing extremely welcome and delightful to good Spirits, and tending to the increase of their happiness, as it is not very material to enquire, so perhaps impossible for us to determine.

However, it cannot from hence be concluded that the *Angels* or *Saints* in Heaven have such an universal knowledge of our condition and affairs, as to be a reasonable ground and warrant to us to pray to them, yea, or to desire them to pray for us; no tho' this were done without any solemn circumstances of Invocation. For they may very well know some things concerning us wherein their own comfort and happiness is likewise concerned, and yet be ignorant of all the rest of our affairs. This one thing we are sure they know, because our Saviour hath told us so; but we are sure of no more. And there is neither equal reason for their knowledge of our other concerns, nor is there any revelation in Scripture to that purpose.

2. Secondly, If God, and the blessed Spirits above, rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, so should we too: and not fret and murmur as the *Pharisees* here did. This is the temper of the Devil, and of very bad men, to regret and envy the good and happiness of others. For it is reasonable to believe, that proportionable to the joy that is in heaven at the repentance of a sinner, is the grief and vexation of the Devil and his instruments, of evil spirits and wicked men. And as the Devil delights in destroying souls, and goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; so no doubt he is in great rage, and gnashes out of very discontent, when at any time he is frustrated of his hopes, and the prey, which he thought himself sure of, is snatched out of his jaws. And thus we see it is with bad men, they do persecute those that forsake them and their wicked ways, and refuse to go along with them to the same excess of Riot.

And this is no where more visible than among those of the Church of Rome. How full of wrath and indignation are they against those who, out of pure conviction of the errors and corruptions of their Church, come over to Ours? How do they persecute them with slanders and reproaches and with all the effects of hatred and malice? So that many times they can scarce refrain from doing them a real mischief, even where it is dangerous to themselves to attempt it: As if they envied them the grace of God and the opportunity of being saved.

I know it is too natural to those of all Communions, to be eager and fierce against those that desert them: And yet, supposing they had the truth certainly on their side (which they cannot all have) I see no great reason for this temper and carriage: For why should I cast away my patience and my charity, because another man hath made shipwreck of his faith? But I do not remember any where among mankind to have observed a more implacable malice, a more sincere and hearty ill-will, than they of the Church of Rome do constantly express towards those that forsake them; nay tho' they give never so modest and reasonable an account of their change, and behave themselves towards their old friends with all the kindness and compassion in the world; yet their hatred and indignation against them runs so high, that one may plainly see, they would sooner forgive a man the greatest sins that human nature can be guilty of, and the breach of all the ten Commandments, than this one Crime of leaving their Church, that is in truth, of growing wiser and better.

3. Thirdly,

3. *Thirdly*, The consideration of what hath been said should mightily inflame our zeal and quicken our industry and diligence for the conversion of sinners. For if the conversion of one soul be worth so much Labour and pains, and matter of such joy to the blessed God and good Spirits, what pains should not we take in so corrupt and degenerate an Age as this of ours; where impenitent sinners do so much abound, and the just are almost failed from among the children of men?

Our blessed Saviour indeed (according to the extraordinary decency of all his Parables) puts the case very charitably, and lays the supposition quite on the other side: if there were but one sinner in the world, or but one of a hundred, yet we should very zealously intend, and with all our might, the reduction of this one lost sheep; and should never be at rest till this single wandring Soul were found and saved. But God knows this is not our case, but quite otherwise: which should quicken our endeavours so much the more, and make us bestir our selves to the utmost, having always in our minds that admirable saying of St. James, *He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death.* He that knows the value of an immortal soul, and how fearful a thing it is to perish everlastingly, can think no pains too much to take to *save a soul from death.*

4. *Lastly*, What an argument and encouragement is here to repentance, even to the greatest of sinners? They, I am sure, stand most in need of it: And tho they of all others have the least reason to look for mercy; yet they shall not be refused; tho they be like the *Publicans* and *Heathens* among the *Jews*, who were not only reputed, but many times really were, the worst of men; tho like the *prodigal Son*, here in the Parable, they have run away from their Father, and *wasted their estate in leud and riotous courses*; yet whenever they come to themselves and are willing to return to their Father, to acknowledge their folly and repent of it, he is ready to receive them; nay much more ready to receive them than they can be to come to him. For when the Prodigal was but coming towards his Father, and *was yet afar off*, the Father runs to meet him, and embraceth him with as much kindness as if he had never offended him, and entertains him with more joy than if he had always continued with him.

How does the great God condescend to encourage our repentance, representing himself and all the blessed company of heaven as transported with joy at the conversion of a sinner, and almost setting a greater value upon repentance than even upon innocence it self? And if our heavenly Father, who hath been so infinitely offended and so highly provok'd by us beyond all patience, be so ready, so forward, so glad to receive us, and there be no hindrance, no difficulty, no discouragement on his part; is it possible after all this that we can be such fools and such enemies to our selves, as to be backward to our own happiness! All of us, the best of us, have too much cause for repentance; and I fear too many of us stand in need of that repentance intended by our Saviour in the Text, which consists in the change of our whole lives.

But I will not upbraid you with your faults; having no design to provoke, but only to persuade men. I leave it to every one's conscience to tell him how great a sinner, how grievous an offender he hath been. God knows we take no pleasure in mentioning the sins of men, but only in their amendment; and we would, if it were possible, even without minding them how bad they have been, persuade and encourage them to be better.

It is but a small consideration to tell you how much it would cheer and comfort our hearts, and quicken our zeal and industry for the salvation of

souls, to see some fruit of our labours; that all our pains are not lost, and that all the good counsel, that is from hence tendred to you, is not like rain falling upon the rocks, and showers upon the sands.

But I have much greater considerations to offer to you; That your Repentance will at once rejoyce the heart of God, and Angels, and Men: that it is a returning to a right mind, and the restoring of you to your selves, to the ease and peace of your own consciences, and to a capacity of being everlastingly happy: that it is to take pity upon your selves and your poor immortal souls; and to take due care to prevent that which is to be dreaded above all things, the being miserable for ever: and last of all, That if thou wilt not repent now, the time will certainly come, and that perhaps in this life, when you shall see the greatest need of repentance, and yet perhaps with miserable *Esau*, find no place for it, tho' you seek it carefully with tears; when you shall cry *Lord, Lord*, and the door shall be shut against you; and shall seek to enter, but shall not be able. To be sure in the other World you shall eternally repent to no purpose and be continually lamenting your wretched condition without hopes of remedy; For there shall be weeping and wailing without effect, without intermission, and without end.

And what cause have we to thank God that this is not yet our case, that we are yet on this side the pit of destruction, and the gulf of despair? O the infinite patience and boundless goodness of God to sinners! With what clemency hath he spared us, and suffered our manners thus long? And with what kindness and concernment does he still call upon us to leave our sins and to return to him, as if in so doing we should make him happy and not our selves? With what earnest longings and desires doth he wait and wish for our repentance, saying, *O that there were such a Heart in them! O that they would hearken unto my voice! When shall it once be?* Thus God is represented in Scripture as patiently attending and listening what effect his admonitions and counsels, his reproofs and threatnings will have upon sinners, Jer. 8. 6. *I hearkned and I heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel.*

And is not this our case? God hath long waited for our repentance; and once a Year we solemnly pretend to set about it: But many of us hitherto, I fear, instead of returning to God, have but more blindly and furiously run on in our course, like the horse that hath no understanding; yea, in this more brutish than the Beast, that he rusheth into the Battel without any consideration of death or danger, and destroys himself without a syllogism: But we sinners have Reason, and yet are mad; the greatest part of evil-doers are sufficiently sensible of the danger of their course, and convinced that eternal misery and ruin will be the end of it; and yet, I know not how, they make a shift upon one pretence or other to discourse and reason themselves into it.

But because the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, and comes with a greater weight and force upon the minds of men than any human persuation whatsoever, I will conclude all with those short and serious counsels and exhortations of God to sinners by his holy Prophets.

Consider and shew your selves men, O ye transgressors: Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near: Repent and turn your selves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

SERMON XVII.

Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

MATTH. XII. 31, 32.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

THE occasion of these words of our blessed Saviour was the blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against that Divine Power by which he wrought his miracles and particularly did cast out Devils. Which works of his, tho' they were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet they obstinately and maliciously imputed them to the power of the Devil. upon which our Saviour takes occasion to declare the danger of the sin, which he calls *blaspheming of the Holy Ghost*: and tells them that this was so great a sin above all other, that it is in a peculiar manner unpardonable. *Wherefore I say unto you, &c.*

For the explaining of these words, and the nature and unpardonableness of this sin, we will enquire into these four things:

First, What is the difference between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost.

Secondly, Wherein the Nature of this sin, or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, doth consist.

Thirdly, In what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable. And,

Fourthly, Upon what account it is so.

1. What is the difference between *speaking against the Son of man* and *speaking against the Holy Ghost*. The reason of this enquiry is, because the Text plainly puts a great difference between them, tho' it be not obvious to discern where it lies. For our Saviour tells us, that *whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall never be forgiven him*: And yet this blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against the Holy Ghost was speaking against the Son of man. For to say he cast out Devils by the Power of the Devil, tho' it was blaspheming of the Holy Ghost by whose power he wrought these miracles, yet it was likewise a blaspheming of Christ himself, and was in effect to say, that he was no true Prophet, nor did come from God, but was a Magician and Impostor.

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For the removing of this difficulty I shall not need to say as some learned men have done, That by *the Son of Man* is here to be understood any man, and that our Saviour is not particularly designed by it. That seems very hard, when our Saviour is so frequently in the Gospel called the *Son of Man*. And especially when St. Luke reciting these words, does immediately before give him this very title to put the matter out of all doubt, *Luke 12. 8, 9, 10. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the son of man also confess before the Angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the Angels of God. Upon which it follows, And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him.* So that in all reason the son of man is the very same person that had this Title given him in the foregoing words, *viz.* our blessed Saviour. So that I take it for granted, that by speaking against the Son of man is here meant speaking against Christ: And by speaking against him, as it is opposed to speaking against the Holy Ghost, is meant all those reproaches and contumelies which they cast upon our Saviour's person, without reflecting upon that divine power which he testified by his miracles. As their reproaching him with the meanness of his birth, *Is not this the Carpenter's son:* with the place of it (as they supposed) *out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet:* Their reflecting upon his life, saying that he was a *wine-bibber, and a glutton, a friend of Publicans and sinners;* with many other calumnies which they maliciously cast upon him.

But by speaking against the Holy Ghost is meant their blaspheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his Miracles; which though it did at last likewise reflect upon our Saviour's person, yet it was an immediate reflexion upon the Holy Ghost, and a blaspheming of him; and therefore it is called speaking against the Holy Ghost, by way of distinction or opposition to the other calumnies which they used against our Saviour; which were proper blasphemies and reproaches of his person, but not of the Holy Ghost also, as this was. This seems to me to be the true difference here intended by our Saviour between *speaking against the son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost,* Let us in the

II. *Second place,* enquire wherein the Nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist. And the true Nature of this sin, tho' it be so plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's description of it, yet I know not how, a great many learned men have made a hard shift to mistake it. Some have made it to be *final impenitency*, because that is unpardonable. But why that, rather than any thing else that is bad, should be called a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost, it is hard to give a reason. Others have placed the nature of it in a *wilful and obstinate opposition of the truth;* which though it be a great sin, and included in the sin here spoken of, or a concomitant of it: yet there is great reason to believe that this is not all that is here meant by it. Others would have it to consist in a malicious opposition of the Truth, *when men know and are convinced that it is the Truth;* which is a great sin indeed, if ever any man were guilty of it; but it is a great Question whether human nature be capable of it; A man may indeed have sufficient means of conviction, and yet not be convinc'd; but it is hardly imaginable that a man should oppose the truth when he is actually convinc'd that it is the truth. And to mention no more, others think it to consist in a renouncing of the truth *for fear of suffering;* which made *Francis Spira* to think that he had committed this sin.

But with all due respect to the judgment of others, I cannot think that any of these is the sin our Saviour here describes. As I shall endeavour plainly

plainly to shew, by considering the occasion of our Saviour's mentioning of it, the persons upon whom our Saviour chargeth this sin, and upon what account he chargeth them with it.

At the 22d Verse of this Chapter there was brought to our Saviour *one possessed with a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him.* Upon this the people were amazed, and said, *Is not this the Son of David?* that is, the *Messias*. The Pharisees hearing this, with great bitterness and contempt said, *This fellow doth not cast out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* Upon this our Saviour represents to them the unreasonableness of this calumny; and that upon these two considerations: 1. That it was very unlikely that the Devil should lend him this power to use it against himself. *Every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation: and every City or House divided against it self shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself, how shall then his Kingdom stand?* 2. Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reason attribute all Miracles to the Devil. There were those among themselves who cast out Devils in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (as Origen, and Tertullian, and Justin Martyr tell us.) Of these our Saviour speaks, and asks the Pharisees *by what power they cast them out?* But they acknowledged that these did it by the power of God, and there was no cause but their malice, why they should not have acknowledged that he did it likewise by the same power, *Ver. 27. If I by Beelzebub cast out Devils, by whom do your Children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges;* that is, This may be sufficient to convince you of malice to me: *But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto you, that is, the Messias is come;* because he wrought these and other miracles to prove that he was the *Messias*. And then it follows, *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

So that the Pharisees are the persons charged with this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And their blasphemy was plainly this, that when he cast out Devils by the Spirit of God, they said he did it by the power of the Devil; they maliciously ascribed these works of the Holy Ghost to the Devil.

And that this is the ground why our Saviour chargeth them with this sin against the Holy Ghost, is yet more plain from St. Mark, Mark 3. 28, 29, 30. *Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said he hath an unclean Spirit:* That is, because the Pharisees charged him to be a Magician and to have a familiar Spirit, by whose assistance he did those works; when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God; therefore our Saviour declares them guilty of this sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost, which should never be forgiven.

So that the nature of this sin did consist in a most malicious opposition to the utmost evidence that could be given to the truth of any Religion. Our blessed Saviour, to shew that he was sent by God, and came from him, wrought miracles, such as did plainly evidence a Divine power and presence accompanying him. For in St. Luke he is said to do them *by the finger of God*, Luke 11. 20. *By the finger of God*, that is, to do such things as were undeniable evidences of the Divine power and presence. And this is the utmost testimony that God ever gave to any person that was sent by him. And the Pharisees were eye-witnesses of those miracles which our Saviour wrought, so that they could not deny them; Yet such was their opposition to him and his

his Doctrine, that tho they saw these things done by him, and could not deny the reality of them, yet rather than they would own him to be the *Messias* and his Doctrine to come from God, they most maliciously and unreasonably ascribed them to the power of the Devil. And this was the blasphemy which they are guilty of against the Holy Ghost. And herein lay the greatness of their sin, in resisting the evidence of those miracles which were so plainly wrought by the Holy Ghost; and which, though themselves saw, yet they maliciously imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them. And this is so very plain, that hardly any man, that considers our Saviour's discourse upon this occasion, can otherwise determine the nature of this sin, especially if he do but attend to those remarkable words which I cited before, *Mark 3. 29. But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; because they said, he hath an unclean spirit.* I come now to the

III. *Third thing I propounded, namely, in what sense this sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable?* For this sin our Saviour positively affirms to be in this different from all other sins, that it is capable of no pardon: *I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men:* And to shew what he means by the not forgiving of it, he tells us, that eternal punishment shall follow it in the other world. *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which *S. Mark* expresseth more plainly, that it shall bring those who are guilty of it to eternal damnation, *Mark 3. 29. He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation.* So that when our Saviour says, *it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come,* he does not intend to insinuate that some sins which are not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the other; but in these words he either alludes to the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the effect of the highest excommunication, the sentence whereof they held not to be reversible, neither in this world nor the other; or else the reason of this expression may probably be to meet with a common and false opinion amongst the *Jews*, which was, That some sins which are not pardoned to men in this life, may by sacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he says it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor the other. And *S. Mark* more plainly, that those who are guilty of it shall never have forgiveness, but be liable to eternal damnation. So that our Saviour's meaning seems plainly to be this, that this sin is altogether incapable of forgiveness. I know some have endeavoured to mollify this matter, but (I think) without sufficient reason. *Grotius* understands the words comparatively, that any sort of sin shall sooner be forgiven than this against the Holy Ghost; and that our Saviour only intended to express the greatness and heinousness of this sin above others, in which respect the pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other sin; but yet that the case of such a person is not absolutely desperate: But if our Saviour had intended to say, that this sin was absolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expressed the matter in higher and fuller words? *Dr. Hammond* mollifies the words another way, that this sin shall never be pardoned, but upon a particular repentance for it: As if our Saviour's meaning was, that a general repentance, which was sufficient for sins of Ignorance, would not be sufficient in this case, but there must be a particular repentance for it, without which it would never be pardoned. But this is by no means agreeable to the scope of our

our Saviour's discourse : Because he plainly intends to difference this from all other sorts of sins, I say unto you, *all manner of sin and blasphemy* shall be forgiven unto men. But according to this interpretation our Saviour must mean that all our sins would be forgiven upon a general repentance; which is not true, for there are many other sins beside sins of Ignorance, there are wilful and heinous sins, such as wilful murder and adultery and blasphemy, (that only excepted which is against the *Holy Ghost*) and the like gross sins, which all Divines hold, shall not be forgiven, but upon a *particular repentance*. So that this interpretation does not sufficiently difference this sin from all other sorts of sins, which, it is yet very plain, our Saviour intended to do. It remains then that these words must in all reason be understood absolutely, that the persons that are guilty of this great sin shall never have it forgiven unto them. And it may be this will not seem so harsh, when we have considered in the

IV. *Fourth place, how it comes to pass that this sin is above all others incapable of pardon : and that, upon these two accounts :*

First, Because by this sin men resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction. What can God be imagined to do more to convince a man of a Divine Revelation, or of the truth of any Doctrine or message that comes from him than to work miracles to this purpose ? And what greater assurance can men have that miracles are wrought, than to be eye-witnesses of them themselves ? And if men will resist such evidence, what can God do more for their satisfaction ? If, when men see plain miracles wrought, they will say that it is not the power of God that does them, but the power of the Devil : And if, when men see the Devils cast out, they will say that the Devil conspires against himself, this is to outface the Sun at Noon-day, and there is no way left to convince such perverse persons of the truth of any Divine Revelation. So that there is no remedy but such persons must continue in their opposition to the truth. For this is such a sin as does in its own nature shut out and prevent all remedy. And he that thus perversely and maliciously opposeth the truth, must upon the same grounds unavoidably continue in his opposition to it ; because there is nothing left to be done for his conviction, more than is already done. If God should send a person immediately from Heaven to him to convince him of his error, he can give him no greater testimony, that he comes from God, than miracles : And if when God enables that person to work these by the power of his Spirit, this man will obstinately impute them to the power of the Devil, he defeats all the imaginable means of his own conviction. So that it is no wonder if that sin be unpardonable, which resists the last and utmost means which God hath ever yet thought fit to use to bring men to repentance and salvation. And if God were willing to reveal himself and the way to pardon and salvation to such a one, he doth by this very temper and disposition render himself incapable of being satisfied and convinced concerning any Divine Revelation.

Secondly, Because this sin is of that high nature, that God is therefore justly provoked to withdraw his grace from such persons ; and it is probable, resolved so to do ; without which grace they will continue impenitent. There is no doubt but God, if he will, can work so powerfully upon the minds of men by his Grace and Spirit, as to convince the most obstinate : and supposing them to be convinced and repent, it cannot be denied but that they would be forgiven. And therefore when our Saviour here says they shall not be forgiven, it is reasonable to suppose that he means that

when persons are come to that degree of obstinacy and malice, God will (as justly he may) withdraw his grace from them : *His Spirit will not strive with them* to overcome their obstinacy, but will leave them to the byas of their own perverse and malicious minds; which will still engage them in a farther opposition to the truth, and finally sink them into perdition. So that being deserted by God, and for want of the necessary help and aid of his grace (justly withdrawn from them) continuing finally impenitent, they become incapable of forgiveness both in this world and that which is to come. And there is nothing that can seem harsh or unreasonable in this, to those who grant (as I think all men do) that God may be so provoked by men, as justly to withdraw his grace from them in this life, that grace which is necessary to their repentance. And surely if any provocation be likely to do it, this cannot be denied to be of all others the greatest, obstinately and maliciously to oppose the utmost evidence that God ever gave to the truth of any doctrine revealed by him. And of this the *Pharisees*, who are here charged with this sin against the Holy Ghost; were notoriously guilty in resisting the clear evidence of our Saviour's miracles.

And thus I have done with the *four* things I propounded to enquire into from these words, *namely*, The difference between speaking against the Son of man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost; wherein the nature of this sin or blasphemy against the Holy Ghost does consist; and in what sense this sin is said to be unpardonable; and upon what account it is so; *namely*, because men by this sin resist their last remedy, and oppose the best and utmost means of their conviction: And because it may reasonably be supposed that upon provocation of this high nature, God may and is resolved to withdraw that grace from such persons which is necessary to their repentance, without which their sin remains for ever unpardonable.

All that now remains is to make this discourse some way or other useful to our selves. And it may very well serve to these *two* purposes. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious persons, who are liable to despair out of an apprehension that they have committed *this sin*. *Secondly*, To caution others against the approaches to it.

1. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious persons, who are liable to despair upon an apprehension that they have committed this great and unpardonable sin; and consequently are utterly incapable of ever being restored to the mercy and favour of God. And nothing can be more for the comfort of such persons than to understand aright what the nature of this sin was, and wherein the heinousness of it doth consist; which I have endeavoured to manifest. And if this be the nature of it which I have declared, as it seems very plain that it is, then I cannot see how any person *now* is likely to be in those circumstances as to be capable of committing it. And being a sin of so heinous a nature, and declar'd by our Saviour to be absolutely unpardonable, there is no reason to extend it beyond the case to which our Saviour applies it; which was the resisting of the evidence of the miracles which were wrought for the truth of Christianity, by those who were eye-witnesses of them, *that is*, by those who had the utmost assurance of them that human nature is capable of. And not only a bare resistance of that evidence, but with a very malicious circumstance, so as to impute those works, which were wrought by the *Holy Ghost*, to the power of the *Devil*. This was the case of the *Pharisees* whom our Saviour chargeth with this sin. And no body hath warrant to extend this sin any farther than this case: and without good warrant it would be the most uncharitable thing in the world to extend it any farther.

That

That which comes nearest to it, both in the heinousness of the crime and the unpardonableness of it, is *total Apostacy from Christianity* after the embracing of it, and full conviction of the truth of it. And this the Scripture seems to place, if not in the same rank, yet near to it. And of this the Apostle speaks very often in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* under the name of *unbelief*, and *sin* by way of eminence, as being the great *sin* that Christians were in danger of falling into, called in that *Epistle* (*Heb. 12. 1.*) *ἡ ἀπειθήναι*, the *sin* which Christians, by reason of the circumstances they were then in, were especially subject to: and he parallels it with the case of the *Jews* in the wilderness, concerning whom God swore that they should not enter into his rest; namely the earthly *Canaan* which was a type of *Heaven*, Chap. 3. ver. 18. And Chap. 6. ver. 4, 5, 6. more expressly; For it is impossible that those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again to repentance. Where by impossible, the least that can be meant is, that it is extremely difficult, for such persons to recover themselves by repentance. And 'tis observable that those persons are said to have been partakers of the Holy Ghost, by which is meant that they were endued with a power of miracles by the Holy Ghost, or were under the conviction of them, as having seen them wrought by others. So that this Apostacy may be said in that respect to be a *sin against the Holy Ghost*. So likewise, Chap. 10. verse 26. if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth (that is, if we apostatize from Christianity, after we have embraced the profession of it, as appears plainly from the Scope of the Apostle's discourse) there remains no more sacrifice for sin: which expression declares this sin either to be unpardonable, or something very like it. And at the 29th verse, those persons are said to tread under foot the Son of God, and to do despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Which signifies that the sin there spoken of is more immediately committed against the Holy Spirit of God: St. Peter likewise declares the great danger of this sin, 2 Pet. 2. 20. If after they have escaped the pollutions of the World through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. St. John likewise seems to speak of this sin of Apostacy, and to call it a *sin unto death*: Discouraging Christians rather, from praying for those who were fallen into it; which gives great suspicion that he looked upon it as hardly pardonable, 1 John 5. 16. If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for those that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it. Now that by the *sin unto death* the Apostle here means Apostacy from the Christian Religion to the Heathen Idolatry, seems extremely probable from what follows, ver. 18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; that is, he preserveth himself from Idolatry, which the Devil had seduced the world into, ver. 19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole World lieth in wickedness *ὁ ὅλος κόσμος ἐν τῇ πονηρίᾳ*, in the wicked one; that is, is under the power of the Devil; and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding to know him that is true; that is, to distinguish between the true God and Idols. And then it follows, This is the true God, and eternal life: Little children, keep your selves from Idols. Which last caution is a key to the understanding of all the rest, and makes it very probable that the *sin unto death* is Apostacy from Christianity unto Idolatry: Otherwise it is hard to imagine how the last clause comes in, Little children,

keep your selves from Idols, And this is that sin which of all others approacheth nearest to this *sin against the Holy Ghost* which our Saviour speaks of, and concerning the pardonableness of which the Scripture seems to speak very doubtfully. But if it were of the same unpardonable nature, yet this can be no trouble to those persons I am speaking of, who cannot but know themselves to be far enough from the guilt of this sin.

As for those other sins which by some are taken to be the sins against the Holy Ghost, they are either such as perhaps no man is capable of committing, as a *malicious opposition to the truth, when I am convinced and know it to be the truth*: For this seems to be a contradiction, to know any thing to be the truth and to believe it to be so, and yet to oppose it; because the understanding can no more oppose truth as truth, than the will can refuse good as good. Or else, they are such as no man can know he is guilty of in this life; as, *final impenitency*, which supposeth a man to live and die without repentance. Or else, such as I think no good man is incident to; as, a *malicious and perverse opposing of the truth after sufficient means of conviction*. However, none of these are that which the Scripture describes to be the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, as I have already shewn.

But still there are two things which usually trouble honest and well-meaning persons, but are rather the Effects of Melancholy than any reasonable ground of trouble. Some think that every *deliberate sin* against knowledge, and after conviction, is the *sin against the Holy Ghost*. This is acknowledged to be a very great aggravation of sin, and such as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveness. Others are troubled with *blasphemous thoughts*, and those they think to be the *sin against the Holy Ghost*. But this is generally the meer effect of Melancholy, and the persons that are troubled with these black thoughts are no ways consenting to them, but they rise in their minds perfectly against their wills and without any approbation of theirs: And in this case they are so far from being the unpardonable sin, that I hope, yea and verily believe, they are no sins at all, but the mere effects of a bodily distemper; and no more imputed to us than the wild and idle ravings of a man in a frenzy or a fever. And God forbid that the natural effects of a bodily disease should bring guilt upon our souls. So that these persons have reason enough for comfort; but the misery is, their present distemper renders them incapable of it.

2. Secondly, The other Use I would make of this discourse is, to caution men against the *degrees and approaches* of this sin. For if the sin against the Holy Ghost be of such a high nature and so unpardonable, then all approaches to it are very dreadful. Such as are, *prophane Scoffing at Religion*, and the *Holy Spirit* of God which dwells in good men: *Abuse of the Holy Scriptures*, which were indited by the Spirit of God: *Perverse infidelity*, notwithstanding all the evidence which we have for the truth of Christianity, and sufficient assurance of the Miracles wrought for the confirmation of it, brought down to us by credible History, though we are not eyewitnesses of them: *Obstinacy in a sinful and vicious course*, notwithstanding all the motives and arguments of the Gospel to persuade men to repentance. *Sinning against the clear conviction of our Consciences*, and the motions and suggestions of God's Holy Spirit to the contrary. *Malicious opposing of the truth* when the Arguments for it are very plain and evident to any impartial and unprejudiced mind, and when he that opposeth the Truth hath no clear satisfaction in his own mind to the contrary, but suffers himself to be furiously and headily carried on in his opposition to it. These are all sins of a very

very high nature, and of the nearest affinity with this great and unpardonable sin, of any that can easily be instanced in. And though God, to encourage the repentance of men, has not declared them unpardonable, yet they are great provocations; and if they be long continued in, we know not how soon God may withdraw his Grace from us, and suffer us to be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Be ready then to entertain the truth of God whenever it is fairly propounded to thee, and with such evidence as thou art willing to accept in other matters where thou hast no prejudice nor interest to the contrary. Do nothing contrary to thy known duty, but be careful in all things to obey the Convictions of thine own Conscience, and to yield to the good motions and suggestions of God's *Holy Spirit*, who works secretly upon the minds of men, and inspires us many times gently with good thoughts and inclinations, and is griev'd when we do not comply with them; and after many repulses will at last withdraw himself from us, and leave us to be assaulted by the temptations of the Devil, and to be hurried away by our own lusts into ruin and perdition.

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

The Example of Jesus in doing good.

ACTS X. 38.

Who went about doing good.

WHEN Almighty God designed the Reformation of the World and the restoring of Man to the Image of God, the Pattern after which he was first made, he did not think it enough to give us the most perfect Laws of holiness and virtue; but hath likewise set before us a living Pattern, and a familiar example to excite and encourage us, to go before us and shew us the way, and as it were to lead us by the hand in the obedience of those Laws. Such is the Sovereign Authority of God over men, that he might, if he had pleased, have only given us a Law written with his own hand, as he did to the people of *Israel* from Mount *Sinai*: but such is his Goodness, that he hath sent a great Ambassador from Heaven to us, *God manifested in the Flesh*, to declare and interpret his will and pleasure; and not only so, but to fulfil that Law himself, the observation whereof he requires of us. The bare Rules of a good life are a very dead and ineffectual thing in comparison of a living Example, which shews us the possibility and practicableness of our Duty; both that it may be done, and how to do it. Religion indeed did always consist in an Imitation of God, and in our resemblance of those excellences which shine forth in the best and most perfect Being; but we may imitate him now with much greater ease and advantage, since God was pleased to become Man on purpose to shew us how men may become like to God. And this is one great End for which the Son of God came into the world, and *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, and conversed so long and familiarly with mankind; that in his own Person and Life he might give us the Example of all that holiness and virtue which his Laws require of us. And as he was in nothing liker the son of God than in being and doing good, so is he in nothing a fitter Pattern for our imitation than in that excellent Character given of him here in the Text, *That he went about doing good.*

In which words two things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, Our Saviour's great Work and Business in the World, which was to *do good*: οὗ δὴ ἵκεν ἐνεργεῖν, who employed himself in being a Benefactor to Mankind. This refers more especially to his healing the bodily diseases and infirmities of men. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil.* Intimating to us by this instance of his doing good, that he who took so much pains to rescue mens Bodies from the power and possession of the Devil, would not let their Souls remain under his tyranny. But, tho the Text instanceth only in one particular, yet this general expression of *doing good* comprehends all those several ways whereby he was beneficial to mankind.

Secondly,

Secondly, Here is his Diligence and Industry in this work, *He went about doing good*, he made it the great business and constant employment of his life. I shall propound to you the Pattern of our Saviour in both these particulars.

I. His great Work and Business in the world was to *do good*. The most pleasant and delightful, the most happy and glorious work in the world. It is a work of a large extent, and of an universal influence; and comprehends in it all those ways whereby we may be useful and beneficial to one another. And indeed it were pity that so good a thing should be confined within narrow bounds and limits. It reacheth to the Souls of men, and to their Bodies; and is conversant in all those ways and kinds whereby we may serve the Temporal or Spiritual good of our Neighbour, and promote his present and his future happiness. What our blessed Saviour did in this kind, and we in imitation of him ought to do, I shall reduce to these two Heads. *First*, Doing good to the Souls of men and endeavouring to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. *Secondly*, The procuring of their temporal good, and contributing as much as may be to their happiness in this present life.

1. Doing good to the *Souls* of men and endeavouring to promote their *spiritual* and *eternal* happiness by good Instruction, and by good Example.

First, By good *Instruction*. And under Instruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their Duty, and exciting them to the practice of it; by instructing their Ignorance, and removing their Prejudices, and rectifying their Mistakes, by Persuasion and by Reproof; and by making lasting Provision for the promoting of these Ends.

By instructing mens Ignorance. And this is a duty which every man owes to another as he hath opportunity, but especially to those who are under our care and charge, our Children and Servants and near Relations, those over whom we have a special authority and a more immediate influence. This our Blessed Saviour made his great work in the world, to instruct all sorts of persons in the things which concerned the Kingdom of God, and to direct them in the way to eternal Happiness; by publick teaching, and by private conversation, and by taking occasion from the common occurrences of human life, and every object that presented it self to him, to instil good counsel into men, and to raise their minds to the consideration of divine and heavenly things. And though this was our Saviour's great Employment, and is theirs more particularly whose Office it is to teach others; yet every man hath private opportunities of instructing others, by admonishing them of their duty, and by directing them to the best means and helps of knowledge; such as are Books of Piety and Religion, with which they that are rich may furnish those who are unable to provide for themselves.

And then by removing mens Prejudices against the Truth, and rectifying their Mistakes. This our Saviour found very difficult; the generality of those with whom he had to do being strongly prejudiced against him and his Doctrine by false Principles, which they had taken in by Education, and been trained up to by their Teachers. And therefore he used a great deal of meekness in instructing those that opposed themselves, and exercised abundance of patience in bearing with the infirmities of men, and their dulness and slowness of capacity to receive the Truth.

And

And this is great Charity, to consider the inveterate Prejudices of men; especially those which are rooted in education, and which men are confirmed in by the reverence they bear to those that have been their Teachers. And great Allowance is to be given to men in this case, and time to bethink themselves and to consider better. For no man that is in an Error thinks he is so; and therefore if we go violently to rend their Opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have patience to unrip them by degrees, they will at last fall in pieces of themselves.

And when this is done, the way is open for Counsel and Persuasion. And this our Saviour administred in a most powerful and effectual manner, by encouraging men to Repentance, and by representing to them the infinite advantages of obeying his Laws, and the dreadful and dangerous consequences of breaking of them. And these are arguments fit to work upon Mankind, because there is something within us that consents to the equity and reasonableness of God's Laws. So that whenever we persuade men to their duty, how backward soever they may be to the practice of it, being strongly addicted to a contrary course, yet we have this certain advantage, that we have their Consciences and the most inward sense of their minds on our side, bearing witness that what we counsel and persuade them to, is for their good.

And if need be we must add Reproof to Counsel. This our Saviour did with great freedom, and sometimes with sharpness and severity, according to the condition of the persons he had to deal withal. But because of his great Authority, being a *Teacher immediately sent from God*, and of his intimate knowledge of the hearts of men, he is not a Pattern to us in all the circumstances of discharging this duty; which, if any other, requires great prudence and discretion if we intend to do good, the only end to be aimed at in it. For many are fit to be reprov'd whom yet every man is not fit to reprove; and in that case we must get it done by those that are fit, and great regard must be had to the time and other circumstances of doing it, so as it may most probably have its effect.

I will mention but one way of Instruction more, and that is by making lasting provision for that purpose: as by founding Schools of Learning, especially to teach the Poor to read, which is the Key of knowledge; by building of Churches and endowing them; by buying or giving in Improvements, or the like. These are large and lasting ways of teaching and instructing others, which will continue when we are dead and gone; as it is said of *Abel*, that *being dead he yet speaks*. And this our Saviour virtually did by appointing his Apostles after he had left the World, to *go and teach all Nations*, and ordering a constant succession of Teachers in his Church to instruct men in the Christian Religion, together with an honourable Maintenance for them. This we cannot do in the way that he did, who had *all power in heaven and earth*, but we may be subservient to this Design in the ways that I have mentioned. Which I humbly commend to the consideration of those whom God hath blessed with great Estates and made capable of effecting such great works of Charity.

Secondly, Another way of doing good to the Souls of men is by good Example. And this our blessed Saviour was in the utmost perfection. For he fulfilled all righteousness, had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. And this we should endeavour to be, as far as the frailty of our nature and imperfection of our present state will suffer. For good example is an unspeakable benefit to mankind, and hath a secret power and influence upon those with whom we converse, to form them into the same disposition and manners.

manners. It is a living Rule, that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them see their fautes without open reproof and upbraiding. Besides that it adds great weight to a man's counsel and persuasion, when we see that he advises nothing but what he does, nor exacts any thing from others from which he himself desires to be excused. As on the contrary, nothing is more cold and insignificant than good counsel from a bad man, one that does not obey his own precepts, nor follow the advice which he is so forward to give to others.

These are the several ways of doing good to the *Souls* of men, wherein we who are the Disciples of the Blessed *Jesus* ought in imitation of his Example to exercise our selves according to our several capacities and opportunities. And this is the noblest Charity, and the greatest kindness that can be shewn to human nature; it is in the most excellent sense to *give eyes to the blind*, to *set the prisoners at liberty*, to rescue men out of the saddest slavery and captivity, and to *save Souls from death*. And it is the most lasting and durable benefit, because it is to do men good to all eternity.

2. The other way of being beneficial to others is, by procuring their *Temporal* good, and contributing to their happiness in this present life. And this, in subordination to our Saviour's great design of bringing men to eternal Happiness, was a great part of his business and employment in this world. He went about *healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases*, and rescuing the Bodies of men from the power and possession of the Devil.

And though we cannot be beneficial to men in that miraculous manner that he was; yet we may be so in the use of ordinary means: We may comfort the afflicted, and vindicate the oppressed, and do a great many acts of Charity which our Saviour, by reason of his poverty, could not do without a Miracle: We may supply the necessities of those that are in want, *feed the hungry and cloath the naked, and visit the sick*, and minister to them such comforts and remedies as they are not able to provide for themselves: We may take a Child that is poor and destitute of all advantages of Education, and bring him up in the knowledge and fear of God, and without any great expence put him into a way wherein, by his diligence and industry, he may arrive to a considerable fortune in the world, and be able afterwards to relieve hundreds of others.* Men glory in raising great and magnificent Structures, and find a secret pleasure to see Sets of their own planting to grow up and flourish: But surely it is a greater and more glorious work to build up a Man, to see a Youth of our own planting, from the small beginnings and advantages we have given him, to grow up into a considerable fortune, to take root in the world, and to shoot up to such a height and spread his branches so wide; that we, who first planted him, may our selves find comfort and shelter under his shadow. We may many times with a small liberality shore up a Family that is ready to fall, and struggles under such necessities that it is not able to support it self. And if our minds were as great as sometimes our estates are, we might do great and publick works of a general and lasting advantage, and for which many Generations to come might call us blessed. And those who are in the lowest condition may do great good to others by their Prayers, if they themselves be as good as they ought. For *the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. The intercession of those who are in favour with God (as all good men are) are not vain wishes, but many times effectual to procure that good for others which their own endeavours could never have effected and brought about.

I have done with the first thing. The great Work and Business which our Blessed Saviour had to do in the world, and that was to *do good*. I proceed to the

II. Second thing contained in the Text, Our Saviour's Diligence and Industry in this work, *He went about doing good*. He made it the great business and constant employment of his life, he travelled from one place to another to seek out opportunities of being useful and beneficial to Mankind. And this will fully appear, if we briefly consider these following particulars:

First, How unwearied our blessed Saviour was in doing good. He made it his only business, and spent his whole life in it. He was not only ready to do good to those that came to him and gave him opportunity for it, and besought him to do it, but went himself from one place to another to seek out objects to exercise his Charity upon. He went to those who could not, and to those who would not come to him; for so it is written of him, *He came to seek and to save that which was lost*. He was contented to spend whole days in this work, to live in a crowd and to be almost perpetually oppressed with company; and when his Disciples were moved at the rudeness of the People in pressing upon him, he rebuked their impatience, and, for the pleasure he took in doing good, made nothing of the trouble and inconvenience that attended it.

Secondly, If we consider how much he denied himself in the chief comforts and conveniences of humane life, that he might do good to others. He neglected the ordinary refreshments of nature, his meat and drink and sleep, that he might attend this work. He was at every body's beck and disposal to do them good. When he was doing cures in one place, he was sent for to another, and he either went or sent healing to them, and did by his word at a distance what he could not come in person to do. Nay he was willing to deny himself in one of the dearest things in the world, his reputation and good name. He was contented to do good, though he was ill thought of and ill spoken of for it. He would not refuse to do good on the Sabbath-day, though he was accounted prophane for so doing. He knew how scandalous it was among the *Jews* to keep company with *Publicans* and Sinners, and yet he would not decline so good a work for all the ill words they gave him for it.

Thirdly, If we consider the malicious opposition and sinister construction that his good deeds met withal. Never did so much goodness meet with so much enmity, *endure* so many affronts and so much *contradiction of Sinners*. This great Benefactor of Mankind was hated and persecuted as if he had been a publick Enemy. While he was instructing them in the meekest manner, they were ready to stone him for telling them the truth; and when the fame of his Miracles went abroad, though they were never so useful and beneficial to mankind, yet upon this very account, they conspire against him and seek to take away his life. Whatever he said or did, though never so innocent, never so excellent, had some bad interpretation put upon it, and the great and shining Virtues of his life were turned into Crimes and matter of accusation. For his casting out of Devils, he was called a Magician; for his endeavour to reclaim men from their Vices, *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; for his free and obliging Conversation, *a Wine-bibber and a Glutton*. All the Benefits which he did to men, and the blessings which he so liberally shed among the people, were construed to be a design of Ambition and Popularity, and done with an intention to

move

move the people to Sedition, and to make himself a King: Enough to have discouraged the greatest goodness, and have put a damp upon the most generous mind, and to make it sick and weary of well-doing. For what more grievous than to have all the good one does ill interpreted, and the best actions in the world made matter of calumny and reproach?

And then lastly, if we consider how cheerfully, notwithstanding all this, he persevered and continued in well-doing. It was not only his business, but his delight; *I delight* (says he) *to do thy will, O my God.* The pleasure which others take in the most natural actions of life, in eating and drinking, when they are hungry, he took in doing good, it was *his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.* He plied this work with so much diligence as if he had been afraid he should have wanted time for it. *I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.* And when he was approaching towards the hardest, and most unpleasant part of his Service, but of all others the most beneficial to us, I mean his Death and Sufferings, he was not at ease in his mind till it was done; *How am I straitned* (says he) *till it be accomplished.* And just before his Suffering, with what Joy and Triumph does he reflect upon the good he had done in his life? *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth, and finished the work which thou hast given me to do.* What a blessed Pattern is here of diligence and industry in doing good? how fair and lovely a Copy for Christians to write after?

And now that I have set it before you, it will be of excellent use to these two purposes: to shew us our Defects; and to excite us to our Duty.

I. To shew us our Defects. How does this blessed Example upbraid those who live in a direct contradiction to it; who instead of *going about doing good* they are perpetually intent upon doing mischief; who are wise and active to do evil, but to do good have no inclination, no understanding? And those likewise who, though they are far from being so bad, yet wholly neglect this blessed work of doing good? They think it very fair to do no evil, to hurt and injure no man: but if Preachers will be so unreasonable as to require more, and will never be satisfied till they have persuaded them out of their estate, and to give to the poor till they have almost impoverish'd themselves, they desire to be excused from this importunity. But we are not so unreasonable neither. We desire to put them in mind, that to be charitable according to our power is an indispensable duty of Religion: that we are commanded not only to abstain from evil, but to do good; and that our blessed Saviour hath given us the Example of both; he did not only *do no sin*, but *he went about doing good*; And upon this nice point it was that the young rich man in the Gospel and his Saviour parted. He had *kept the Commandments from his youth, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal*: he had been very careful of the negative part of Religion; But, when it came to parting with his Estate and *giving to the poor*, this he thought too hard a condition, and upon this he forsook our Saviour, and forfeited the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is very considerable, and ought to be often and seriously thought upon, that our Saviour describing to us the day of Judgment represents the great Judge of the World acquitting and condemning men according to the good which they had done, or neglected to do, in ways of mercy and charity; for feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick, or for neglecting to do these things:

things : Than which nothing can more plainly and effectually declare to us the necessity of doing good, in order to the obtaining eternal Happiness.

There are many indeed who do not altogether neglect the doing of this work, who yet do in a great measure prevent and hinder themselves from doing it as they ought, under a pretence of being employed about other Duties and parts of Religion. They are so taken up with the exercises of Piety and Devotion in private and publick; with Prayer, and reading and hearing Sermons, and preparing themselves for the Sacrament, that they have scarce any leisure to mind the doing of good and charitable offices to others: or if they have, they hope God will pardon his servants in this thing, and accept of their Piety and Devotion instead of all. But they ought to consider, that when these two parts of Religion come in competition, Devotion is to give way to Charity; *Mercy* being better than *Sacrifice*: That the great End of all the Duties of Religion; Prayer, and reading and hearing the Word of God, and receiving the holy Sacrament is to dispose and excite us to do good, to make us more ready and forward to every good work: and that it is the greatest mockery in the world, upon pretence of using the means of Religion to neglect the end of it; and because we are always preparing our selves to do good, to think that we are for ever excused from doing any.

Others are taken up in contending for the Faith, and spend all their zeal and heat about some controversies in Religion; and therefore they think it but reasonable that they should be excused from those meaner kind of Duties, because they serve God, as they imagine, in a higher and more excellent way: as those who serve the King in his Wars use to be exempted from Taxes and Offices. But do those men consider upon what kind of Duties more especially our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles lay the great weight and stress of Religion? that it is to the Meek, and Merciful, and Peaceable that our Saviour pronounceth Blessedness? that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*? That *the wisdom which is from above is full of mercy and good works*? These are the great and weighty things of Religion, which, whatever else we do, ought not to be left undone. Do they consider that a right Faith is wholly in order to a good Life, and is of no value any farther than it hath an influence upon it? So that whatever other Duties we may be obliged to, nothing can excuse us from this. How much better is it to do good, to be really useful and beneficial to others, and how much more clearly and certainly our duty, than to quarrel about doubtful and uncertain opinions? Were men Christians indeed they would be so much delighted and taken up with this better work (more acceptable to God, and more profitable to men) that they could not find leisure, or if they could, they could not find in their hearts to employ all their time and zeal about things which are at so great a distance from the life and heart of Religion, as most of those Questions are which Christians at this day contend and languish about. Were we possessed with the true spirit of Christianity, these would be but dry and insipid and tasteless things to us, in comparison of the blessed employment of doing good in a more real and substantial way. If the sincere love of God and our Neighbour were but once thoroughly kindled in our hearts, these pure and heavenly flames would in a great measure extinguish the unchristian heats of dispute and contention; as Fires here below are ready to languish and go out, when the Sun in his full strength shines upon them.

II. But the hardest part of my task is yet behind, and it is strange it should be so; and that is to persuade us to the imitation of this blessed Example. Let us go and do likewise; let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus; let us tread in the steps of the great God and the best Man that ever was, our blessed Saviour, who went about doing good. Methinks the work it self is of that nature, that men should not need to be courted to it by persuasion, nor urged by importunity. The very proposal of the thing, and the Pattern which I have set before you, is temptation and allurements enough to a generous and well-disposed mind. But yet to inflame you the more to so good a work, be pleased to dwell with me a little upon these following considerations:

First, it is an argument of a great and generous mind, to employ our selves in doing good, to extend our thoughts and care to the concerns of others, and to use our power and endeavours for their benefit and advantage; because it shews an inclination and desire in us to have others happy as well as our selves.

Those who are of a narrow and envious spirit, of a mean and sordid disposition, love to contract themselves within themselves, and like the *Hedgehog* to shoot out their quills at every one that comes near them. They take care of no body but themselves, and foolishly think their own happiness the greater because they have it alone and to themselves. But the noblest and most heavenly dispositions think themselves happiest when others share with them in their happiness. Of all Beings God is the farthest removed from Envy, and the nearer any Creature approacheth to him in blessedness the farther it is off from this hellish quality and disposition. It is the temper of the Devil to grudge happiness to others; he envied that Man should be in Paradise when He was cast out of Heaven.

Other Perfections are (as one says) of a more melancholick and solitary disposition, and shine brightest when they are alone, or attained to but by a few; once make them common and they lose their lustre. But it is the nature of goodness to communicate it self, and the farther it spreads the more glorious it is. God reckons it as one of his most glorious Titles, as the brightest Gem in his Diadem, *The Lord mighty to save*. He delights not to shew his Sovereignty in ruining the Innocent and destroying helpless Creatures; but in rescuing them out of the jaws of Hell and Destruction. To the Devil belongs the Title of the *Destroyer*.

Without this quality of goodness all other Perfections would change their nature, and lose their excellency. Great Power and Wisdom would be terrible, and raise nothing but dread, and suspicion in us: For Power without Goodness would be Tyranny and Oppression, and Wisdom would become Craft and Treachery. A Being endued with Knowledge and Power, and yet wanting Goodness, would be nothing else but an irresistible Evil, and an omnipotent Mischief. We admire Knowledge, and are afraid of Power, and suspect Wisdom: But we can heartily love nothing but Goodness, or such Perfections as are in conjunction with it. For Knowledge and Power may be in a nature most contrary to God's; the Devil hath these Perfections in an excellent degree. When all is done, nothing argues a great and generous mind but only Goodness; which is a propension and disposition to make others happy, and a readiness to do them all the good Offices we can.

Secondly, To do Good is the most pleasant employment in the World. It is natural; and whatever is so is delightful. We do like our selves whenever we relieve the wants and distresses of others. And therefore this Virtue among all other hath peculiarly entituled it self to the name of *Humanity*. We answer our own Nature, and obey our Reason and shew our selves Men, in shewing

shewing mercy to the miserable. Whenever we consider the evils and afflictions of others, we do with the greatest reason collect our Duty from our nature and inclination, and make our own wishes and desires and expectations from others a law and rule to our selves. And this is pleasant, to follow our nature and to gratify the importunate dictates of our own Reason. So that the benefits we do to others are not more welcome to them that receive them, than they are delightful to us that do them. We ease our own nature and bowels, whenever we help and relieve those who are in want and necessity. As on the contrary, no man that hath not divested himself of humanity can be cruel and hard-hearted to others without feeling some pain in himself. There is no sensual pleasure in the world comparable to the delight and satisfaction that a good man takes in doing good. This Cato in Tully boasts of as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *That nothing was more pleasant to him than the Conscience of a well spent life, and the remembrance of many benefits and kindnesses done to others.* Sensual pleasures are not lasting, but presently vanish and expire; but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them, as the pleasure goes off.

—*Succedit frigida cura.*

Sadness and Melancholy come in the place of it, guilt and trouble and repentance follow it. But the pleasure of doing good remains after a thing is done, the thoughts of it lie easy in our minds, and the reflexion upon it afterwards does for ever minister joy and delight to us. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good is the very temper and disposition of happiness. Solomon, after all his experience of worldly pleasures, pitches at last upon this as the greatest felicity of human life, and the only good use that is to be made of a prosperous and plentiful fortune, *Eccl. 3. 12. I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life.* And a greater and a wiser than Solomon had said, that *it is more blessed to give, than to receive.*

Thirdly, to employ our selves in doing good is to imitate the highest Excellency and perfection. It is to be like God *who is good and doth good*, and to be like him in that which he esteems his greatest glory, and that is, his goodness. It is to be like the Son of God, who when he took our nature upon him and lived in the world, *went about doing good.* It is to be like the blessed Angels, whose great employment is to be *ministring Spirits for the good of others.* To be charitable and helpful and beneficial to others, is to be a good Angel and a Saviour and a God to men. And the Example of our blessed Saviour more especially is the great Pattern which our Religion propounds to us. And we have all the reason in the World to be in love with it; because that very Goodness which it propounds to our imitation, was so beneficial to our selves: when we our selves feel and enjoy the happy effects of that good which he did in the world, this should mightily endear the Example to us, and make us forward to imitate that love and kindness to which we are indebted for so many blessings, and upon which all our hopes of happiness do depend.

And there is this considerable difference between our Saviour's Charity to us, and ours to others: He did all purely for our sakes and for our benefit, whereas all the good we do to others is a greater good done to our selves. They are indeed beholden to us for the kindness we do them, and we to them for the opportunity of doing it. Every ignorant person that comes in our way to be instructed by us, every sinner whom we reclaim, every poor

poor man we relieve, is a happy opportunity of doing good to our selves, and of *laying up for our selves a good treasure against the time which is to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* By this principle the best and the happiest man that ever was, governed his life and actions, esteeming it a *more blessed thing to give than to receive.*

Fourthly, This is one of the greatest and most substantial Duties of Religion; and, next to the love and honour which we pay to God himself, the most acceptable service that we can perform to him. It is one half of the Law, and next to the first and great Commandment, and very like unto it: like to it in the excellency of its nature, and in the necessity of its obligation. For *this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.* The first Commandment excels in the dignity of the object; but the second hath the advantage in the reality of its effects. For *our righteousness extendeth not to God,* we can do him no real benefit: but our Charity to men is really useful and beneficial to them. For which reason God is contented, in many cases, that the external Honour and Worship which by his positive command he requires of us, should give way to that natural duty of Love and Mercy which we owe to one another. And to shew how great a value he puts upon Charity, he hath made it the great testimony of our love to himself; and for want of it, rejects all other professions of love to him as false and insincere. *If any man say, I love God, and loveth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

Fifthly, This is that which will give us the greatest comfort when we come to die. It will then be no pleasure to men to reflect upon the greatest estates they have got, and the great places they have been advanced to, because they are leaving these things, and they will stand them in no stead in the other world: *Riches profit not in the day of wrath:* But the conscience of well-doing will refresh our Souls even under the very pangs of death. With what contentment does a good man then look upon the good he hath done in this life? and with what confidence doth he look over into the other world, where he hath provided for himself *bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not?* For though our estates will not follow us into the other World, our good works will; tho we cannot carry our riches along with us, yet we may send them before us to make way for our reception into everlasting habitations. In short, works of Mercy and Charity will comfort us at the hour of death, and plead for us at the day of Judgement, and procure for us at the hands of a merciful God a glorious recompence at the resurrection of the just. Which leads me to the

Last Consideration I shall offer to you; which is the reward of doing good, both in this world and the other. If we believe God himself, he hath made more particular and encouraging promises to this grace and virtue than to any other.

The advantages of it in this World are many and great. It is the way to derive a lasting blessing upon our estates. Acts of Charity are the best Deeds of Settlement. We gain the prayers and blessings of those to whom we extend our charity, and it is no small thing to have *the blessing of them that are ready to perish to come upon us.* For God hears the prayers of the destitute, and his ear is open to their Cry. Charity is a great security to us in times of evil: and that not only from the special promise and providence of God, which are engaged to preserve from want those that relieve the necessities of other; but likewise from the nature of the thing, which makes way for its own reward in this world. He that is charitable to others provides

vides a supply and retreat for himself in the day of distress : For he provokes mankind by his example to like tenderness towards him, and prudently bespeaks the commiseration of others against it comes to be his turn to stand in need of it. Nothing in this world makes a man more and surer Friends than Charity and Bounty, and such as will stand by us in the greatest troubles and dangers. *For a good man (says the Apostle) one would even dare to die.* 'Tis excellent counsel of the Son of Sirach; *Lay up thy treasure according to the Commandment of the most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up thy Alms in thy store-house, and it shall deliver thee from all affliction : It shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty Shield and strong Spear.* It hath sometimes happened that the obligation that men have laid upon others by their Charity, hath in case of danger and extremity done them more kindness than all the rest of their Estate could do for them; and their Alms have literally delivered them from death.

But what is all this to the endless and unspeakable Happiness of the Next life, where the returns of doing good will be vastly great, beyond what we can now expect or imagine? For God takes all the Good we do to others as a debt upon himself, and he hath estate and treasure enough to satisfy the greatest obligations we can lay upon him. So that we have the Truth, and Goodness, and Sufficiency of God for our security, that what we scatter and sow in this kind will grow up to a plentiful harvest in the other world; and that all our pains and expence in doing good for a few days will be recompensed and crowned with the joys and glories of Eternity.

SERMON

S E R M O N XIX,

On the Fifth of November, 1678. Before the Honourable House of Commons.

LUKE IX. 55, 56.

But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.

AMONG many other things, which may justly recommend the *Christian Religion* to the approbation of mankind, the intrinsic goodness of it is most apt to make impression upon the Minds of serious and considerate men. The Miracles of it are the great external evidence and confirmation of its Truth and Divinity; but the morality of its Doctrines and Precepts, so agreeable to the best reason and wisest apprehensions of mankind, so admirably fitted for the perfecting of our natures, and the sweetning of the spirits and tempers of men, so friendly to human Society, and every way so well calculated for the peace and order of the World: These are the things which our Religion glories in, as her crown and excellency. *Miracles* are apt to awaken and astonish, and by a sensible and over-powering evidence to bear down the prejudices of infidelity; but there are secret charms in *goodness*, which take fast hold of the hearts of men, and do insensibly, but effectually, command our love and esteem.

And surely nothing can be more proper to the occasion of this Day, than a Discourse upon this Argument; which so directly tends to correct that unchristian spirit, and mistaken zeal, which hath been the cause of all our troubles and confusions, and had so powerful an influence upon that horrid Tragedy which was designed, now near upon fourscore years ago, to have been acted as upon this Day.

And that we may the better understand the reason of our Saviour's reproof here in the Text, it will be requisite to consider the occasion of this hot and furious zeal which appeared in some of his Disciples. And that was this: Our Saviour was going from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem*, and being to pass through a Village of *Samaria*, he sent messengers before him to prepare entertainment for him; but the People of that Place would not receive him, because he was going to *Jerusalem*: the Reason whereof was, the difference of Religion which then was between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. Of which I shall give you this brief account.

The *Samaritans* were originally that Colony of the *Assyrians* which we find in the Book of *Kings* was, upon the Captivity of the Ten Tribes, planted in *Samaria* by *Salmanassar*. They were Heathens, and worshipped their own Idols, till they were so infested with Lions, that for the redress of this mischief they desired to be instructed in the worship of the God of *Israel*,

hoping by this means to appease the anger of the God of the Country ; and then they worshipped the God of *Israel* together with their own Idols, for so it is said in the History of the *Kings*, that *they feared the Lord, and served their own Gods.*

After the Tribe of *Judah* were returned from the Captivity of *Babylon*, and the Temple of *Jerusalem* was rebuilt, all the *Jews* were obliged by a solemn Covenant to put away their *Heathen Wives*. It happened that *Manasses*, a *Jewish* Priest, had married the Daughter of *Sanballat* the *Samaritan* ; and being unwilling to put away his Wife, *Sanballat* excited the *Samaritans* to build a Temple upon Mount-*Gerizim* near the City of *Samaria*, in opposition to the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and made *Manasses* his Son-in-law Priest there.

Upon the building of this new Temple there arose a great feud between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, which in process of time grew to so violent a hatred, that they would not so much as shew common civility to one another. And this was the reason why the *Samaritans* would not receive our Saviour in his journey, because they perceived he was going to worship at *Jerusalem*.

At this uncivil usage of our Saviour, two of his Disciples, *James* and *John*, presently take fire, and out of a well-meaning zeal for the honour of their Master, and of the true God, and of *Jerusalem* the true place of his Worship, they are immediately for dispatching out of the way these Enemies of God, and Christ, and the true Religion ; these *Hereticks* and *Schismatics* ; for so they called one another. And to this end they desire our Saviour to give them power to call for Fire from Heaven to consume them, as *Elias* had done in a like case, and that too not far from *Samaria* ; and it is not improbable that their being so near the place where *Elias* had done the like before, might prompt them to this request.

Our Saviour seeing them in this heat, notwithstanding all the reasons they pretended for their passion, and for all they sheltered themselves under the great Example of *Elias*, doth very calmly, but severely, reprove this temper of theirs, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of : for the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them.*

Grotius observes, that these two excellent Sentences are left out in a Manuscript that is in *England*. I cannot tell what Manuscript he refers to ; but if it were a Copy written out in the height of Popery, no wonder if some zealous Transcriber, offended at this passage, struck it out of the Gospel, being confident our Saviour would not say any thing that was so directly contrary to the current Doctrine and Practice of those times. But, thanks be to God, this admirable saying is still preserved, and can never be made use of upon a fitter occasion.

Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of : That is, Ye own your selves to be my Disciples, but do you consider what spirit now acts and governs you ? Not that surely which my Doctrine designs to mould and fashion you into, which is not a furious and persecuting and destructive spirit, but mild and gentle and saving ; tender of the lives and interests of men, even of those who are our greatest Enemies : You ought to consider, That you are not now under the rough and sour Dispensation of the Law, but the calm and peaceable Institution of the Gospel ; to which the spirit of *Elias*, though he was a very good man in his time, would be altogether unsuitable. God permitted it then, under that imperfect way of Religion ; but now under the Gospel it would be intolerable : For that designs universal love, and peace, and good-will : and now no difference of Religion, no pretence of zeal for God and Christ can warrant and justify this passionate and fierce, this vindictive and exterminating spirit.

For

For the Son of Man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. He says indeed elsewhere, that he was not come to send Peace, but a Sword; which we are not to understand of the natural tendency of his Religion, but of the accidental event and effect of it, through the malice and perverseness of men: But here he speaks of the proper intention and design of his coming: He came not to kill and destroy, but for the Healing of the Nations; for the salvation and redemption of Mankind, not only from the wrath to come, but from a great part of the evils and miseries of this life: He came to discountenance all fierceness and rage and cruelty in men, one towards another; to restrain and subdue that furious and unpeaceable spirit, which is so troublesome to the world, and the cause of so many mischiefs and disorders in it: And to introduce a Religion which consults not only the eternal salvation of mens souls, but their temporal peace and security, their comfort and happiness in this world.

The words thus explained contain this Observation, That a revengeful, and cruel, and destructive Spirit is directly contrary to the design and temper of the Gospel, and not to be excused upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.

In the prosecution of this Argument, I shall confine my discourse to these Three heads.

First, To shew the opposition of this spirit to the true Spirit and design of the Christian Religion.

Secondly, The unjustifiableness of it upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.

Thirdly, To apply this Discourse to the occasion of this Day.

I. First, I shall shew the opposition of this Spirit to the true Spirit and design of the Christian Religion: That it is directly opposite to the main and fundamental Precepts of the Gospel, and to the great Patterns and Examples of our Religion, our Blessed Saviour, and the Primitive Christians.

I. This spirit which our Saviour here reproveth in his Disciples, is directly opposite to the main and fundamental Precepts of the Gospel; which command us to love one another, and to love all men, even our very enemies; and are so far from permitting us to persecute those who hate us, that they forbid us to hate those who persecute us: They require us to be merciful as our Father which is in Heaven is merciful; to be kind and tender hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us: And to put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekness and long suffering, and to follow peace with all men and to shew all meekness to all men: And particularly the Pastors and Governours of the Church are especially charged to be of this temper, The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth. To all which Precepts, and many more that I might reckon up, nothing can be more plainly opposite than inhumane Cruelties and Persecutions, treacherous Conspiracies and bloody Massacres, a barbarous Inquisition, and a holy League to extirpate all that differ from us. And instead of instructing in meekness those that oppose themselves, to convert men with fire and faggot, and to reach them as Gideon did the men of Succoth with briers and thorns; and instead of waiting for their repentance and endeavouring to recover them out of the share of the Devil, to put them quick into his hands, and to dispatch them to Hell as fast as is possible. If the precepts of Christianity can be contradicted, surely

it cannot be done more grossly and palpably than by such practices.

2. This spirit is likewise directly opposite to the great *Patterns* and *Examples* of our Religion, our *Blessed Saviour*, and the *Primitive Christians*. It was prophesied of our *Saviour* that he should be the *Prince of Peace*, and should make it one of his great businesses upon earth, to make Peace in Heaven and Earth, to reconcile Men to God and to one another, to take up all those feuds and to extinguish all those animosities that were in the World; to bring to an agreement and a peaceable demeanour one towards another those that were most distant in their tempers and interests; to *make the lamb and the wolf lie down together, that there might be no more destroying nor devouring in all God's holy mountain; that is, that that cruel and destructive spirit which prevailed before in the World; should then be banished out of all Christian societies.*

And in conformity to these predictions, when our Saviour was born into the world, the Angels sang that heavenly *Anthem, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will among men.* And when he appeared in the world, his whole life and carriage was gentle and peaceable, full of meekness and charity. His great business was to be beneficial to others, to seek and to save that which was lost; *he went about doing good*, to the bodies and to the souls of men: his miracles were not destructive to mankind, but healing and charitable. He could, if he had pleased, by his miraculous power have confounded his enemies, and have thundred out death and destruction against the Infidel World, as his pretended *Vicar* hath since done against Hereticks. But intending that his Religion should be propagated in human ways, and that Men should be drawn to the profession of it by the *bands of love*, and the *cords of a man*, by the gentle and peaceable methods of Reason and Persuasion; he gave no example of a furious zeal and religious rage against those who despised his Doctrine. It was propounded to men for their great advantage, and they rejected it at their utmost peril. It seemed good to the Author of this Institution, to compel no man to it by temporal punishments. When he went about making proselytes, he offered violence to no man, only said, *If any man will be my disciple, If any man will come after me.* And when his disciples were leaving him, he does not set up an Inquisition to torture and punish them for their defection from the faith, only says, *Will ye also go away?*

And in imitation of this blessed Pattern the Christian Church continued to speak and act for several Ages. And this was the language of the holy Fathers, *Lex nova non se vindicat ultore gladio*, the Christian Law doth not avenge it self by the Sword. This was then the style of Councils, *Nemini, ad credendum vim inferre*, to offer no violence to no man to compel him to the Faith. I proceed in the

II. *Second place*, to shew the *Unjustifiableness of this spirit upon any pretence whatsoever for zeal of God and Religion.* No case can be put with Circumstances of greater advantage and more likely to justify this spirit and temper, than the case here in the Text. Those against whom the Disciples would have called for fire from Heaven, were Hereticks and Schismaticks from the true Church; they had affronted our Saviour himself in his own person; the honour of God, and of that Religion which he had set up in the World, and of *Jerusalem* which he had appointed for the place of his worship, were all concerned in this case: so that if ever it were warrantable to put on this fierce and furious zeal, here was a case that seem'd to require it: But even in these circumstances our Saviour thinks fit to rebuke and discountenance this

this Spirit, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.* And gives such a reason as ought in all differences of Religion, how wide soever they be, to deter men from this temper, *For the Son of man is not come to destroy mens lives but to save them*; that is, this Spirit is utterly inconsistent with the great design of Christian Religion, and the end of our Saviour's coming into the World.

And now, what hath the Church of *Rome* to plead for her cruelty to men for the cause of Religion, which the disciples might not much better have pleaded for themselves in their case? what hath she to say against those who are the objects of her cruelty and persecution, which would not have held against the *Samaritans*? Does she practise these severities out of a zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, and Christ, and the true Religion? Why, upon these very accounts it was, that the disciples would have called for *fire from Heaven* to have destroyed the *Samaritans*. Is the Church of *Rome* persuaded that those whom she persecutes are Hereticks and Schismatics, and that no punishment can be too great for such offenders? So the Disciples were persuaded of the *Samaritans*: and upon much better grounds: Only the Disciples had some excuse in their case, which the Church of *Rome* hath not; and that was Ignorance: And this Apology our Saviour makes for them, *ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of*: They had been bred up in the Jewish Religion, which gave some indulgence to this kind of temper, and they were able to cite a great Example for themselves; besides, they were then but learners and not thoroughly instructed in the Christian Doctrine. But in the Church of *Rome*, whatever the case of particular persons may be, as to the whole Church and the Governing part of it, this ignorance is wilful and affected, and therefore inexcusable. For the Christian Religion which they profess to embrace, does as plainly teach the contrary as it does any other matter whatsoever: and it is not more evident in the New Testament that Christ died for sinners, than that Christians should not kill one another for the misbelief of any Article of *Revealed Religion*; much less for the disbelief of such Articles as are *invented* by men, and imposed as the Doctrines of Christ.

You have heard what kind of *Spirit* it is, which our Saviour here reproves in his Disciples. It was a furious and destructive *Spirit*, contrary to Christian charity and goodness. But yet this may be said in mitigation of their fault, that they themselves offered no violence to their enemies: They left it to God, and no doubt would have been very glad that he would have manifested his severity upon them, by sending down *fire from Heaven* to have consumed them.

But there is a much worse *Spirit* than this in the world, which is not only contrary to *Christianity*, but to the common principles of *Natural Religion*, and even to *Humanity* it self: Which by falshood and perfidiousness, by secret plots and conspiracies, or by open sedition and rebellion, by an Inquisition or Massacre, by deposing or killing Kings, by fire and sword, by the ruine of their Country, and betraying it into the hands of Foreigners; and in a word, by dissolving all the bonds of human Society, and subverting the peace and order of the World, *that is*, by all the wicked ways imaginable both to incite men to promote and advance their Religion. As if all the world were made for *them*, and there were not only no other Christians, but no other Men besides themselves; as *Babylon* of old proudly vaunted, *I am, and there is none besides me*: And as if the God, whom the Christians worship, were not *the God of order but of confusion*; as if He whom we call *the Father of mercies*, were delighted with cruelty, and could not

not have a more pleasing sacrifice offer'd to him than a Massacre, nor put a greater honour upon his Priests than to make them Judges of an Inquisition, *that is*, the inventors and decreers of torments for men more righteous and innocent than themselves.

Thus to misrepresent God and Religion, is to devalue them of all their Majesty and Glory. For if that of *Seneca* be true, that *sine bonitate nulla majestas, without Goodness there can be no such thing as Majesty*, then to separate goodness and mercy from God, compassion and charity from Religion, is to make the two best things in the world, God and Religion good for nothing.

How much righter apprehensions had the *Heathens* of the *Divine Nature*, which they looked upon as so benign and beneficial to mankind, that (as *Tully* admirably says) *Dii immortales ad usum hominum fabricati penè videantur, The nature of the immortal Gods may almost seem to be exactly framed for the benefit and advantage of Men*. And as for Religion, they always spake of it as the great band of human Society, and the foundation of truth and fidelity, and justice among men. But when Religion once comes to supplant moral righteousness, and to teach men the absurdest things in the world, to lye for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake: when it serves to no other purpose, but to be a bond of conspiracy, to inflame the tempers of men to a greater fierceness, and to set a keener edge upon their spirits, and to make them *ten times the more the children of wrath and cruelty than they were by nature* then surely it loses its nature, and ceases to be Religion: For let any man say worse of *Atheism* and *Infidelity*, if he can. And, for God's sake, what is Religion good for, but to reform the manners and dispositions of men, to restrain human nature from violence and cruelty, from falshood and treachery, from Sedition and Rebellion? Better it were there were no *Revealed Religion*, and that humane nature were left to the conduct of its own principles and inclinations, which are much more mild and merciful, much more for the peace and happiness of humane society; than to be acted by a Religion that inspires men with so wild a fury, and prompts them to commit such outrages: and is continually supplanting Government, and undermining the welfare of mankind; in short, such a religion as teaches men to propagate and advance it self by means so evidently contrary to the very nature and end of all Religion.

And this, if it be well consider'd, will appear to be a very convincing way of reasoning, by shewing the last result and consequence of such principles, and of such a Train of Propositions, to be a most gross and palpable absurdity. For example, We will at present admit *Popery* to be the true Religion, and their Doctrines of *extirpating Hereticks*, of the lawfulness of *deposing Kings*, and subverting Government by all the cruel and wicked ways that can be thought of, to be, as in truth they are, the doctrines of this Religion: In this case, I would not trouble my self to debate particulars: but if in the gross, and upon the whole matter it be evident that such a Religion as this is as bad or worse than Infidelity and no Religion, this is conviction enough to a wise man, and as good as a demonstration, that this is not the true Religion, and that it cannot be from God.

How much better teachers of Religion were the old *Heathen Philosophers*? In all whose Books and Writings there is not one Principle to be found of Treachery or Rebellion; nothing that gives the least countenance to an Association or a Massacre, to the betraying of ones Native Country, or the cutting of his neighbour's throat for difference in opinion. I speak it with grief and shame, because the credit of our common Christianity is somewhat concerned in it, that *Panatinus* and *Antipater* and *Diogenes the Stoick*, *Tully* and

and *Plutarch* and *Seneca* were much honest and more Christian *Casuits*, than the *Jesuits* are, or the generality of the *Casuits* of any other Order, that I know of, in the Church of *Rome*. I come now in the

III. Third and last place, to make some *Application* of this Discourse.

1. Let not Religion suffer for those faults and miscarriages which really proceed from the ignorance of Religion, and from the want of it. That under colour and pretence of Religion, very bad things are done, is no argument that Religion it self is not good: Because the best things are liable to be perverted and abused to very ill purposes, nay the corruption of them is commonly the worst; as, they say, the richest and noblest Wines make the sharpest Vinegar. If the light that is in you, saith our Saviour, be darkness, how great is that darkness?

2. Let us beware of that Church which countenanceth this unchristian Spirit here condemned by our Saviour; and which teaches us such *Doctrines*, and warrants such *Practices* as are consonant thereto. You all know, without my saying so, that I mean the Church of *Rome*; in which are taught such *Doctrines* as these, That He reticks, that is, all whodiffer from them in matters of Faith, are to be extirpated by fire and Sword; which was decreed in the third and fourth *Lateran* Councils, where all Christians are strictly charged to endeavour this to the uttermost of their power, *Sicut reputari cupiunt & haberi fideles, as they desire to be esteemed and accounted Christians*. Next their *Doctrines* of deposing Kings, and of absolving their Subjects from obedience to them; which were not only universally believed, but practised by the *Popes* and *Roman Church* for several Ages. Indeed this Doctrine hath not been at all times alike frankly and openly avowed, but it is undoubtedly theirs; and hath frequently been put in execution, though they have not thought it so convenient at all turns to make profession of it. It is a certain kind of Engine, which is to be screw'd up or let down as occasion serves; and is commonly kept like *Goliath's Sword* in the Sanctuary behind the *Epoh*, but yet so that the *High-Priest* can lend it out upon an extraordinary occasion.

And for *Practices* consonant to these *Doctrines*, I shall go no farther than the horrid and bloody Design of this Day. Such a Mystery of Iniquity, as had been hid from ages and generations; Such a Master-piece of Villany, as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor ever before entred into the heart of man: So prodigiously barbarous, both in the substance and circumstances of it, as is not to be parallell'd in all the voluminous Records of Time, from the foundation of the World.

Of late years our *Adversaries* (for so they have made themselves without any provocation of ours) have almost had the impudence to deny so plain a matter of fact; but I wish they have not taken an effectual course by fresh Conspiracies, of equal or greater horror, to confirm the belief of it with a witness. But I shall not anticipate what will be more proper for another Day, but confine my self to the present Occasion.

I will not trouble you with the particular Narrative of this dark Conspiracy, nor the obscure manner of its discovery, which *Bellarmin* himself acknowledges not to have been without a *Maracle*. Let us thank God that it was so happily discovered and disappointed, as I hope their present design will be by the same wonderful and merciful providence of God towards a most unworthy People. And may the lameness and halting of *Ignatius Loyola*, the Founder of the *Jesuits*, never depart from that Order, but be a Fate continually attending all their villanous Plots and Contrivances.

I shall

I shall only observe to you, that after the discovery of this Plot the Authors of it were not convinced of the evil, but sorry for the miscarriage of it. Sir Everard Digby, whose very original Papers and Letters are now in my hands after he was in prison, and knew he must suffer, calls it *the best Cause*; and was extremely troubled to hear it *censured by Catholicks and Priests, contrary to his expectation, for a great sin*: Let me tell you, says he, what a grief it is, to bear *T H A T* so much condemned, which I did believe would have been otherwise thought of by Catholicks. And yet he concludes that Letter with these words: *In how full joy should I dye, if I could do any thing for the Cause which I love more than my life!* And in another Letter he says, he could have said something to have mitigated the odium of this business, as to that Point of involving those of his own Religion in the common ruin. *I dare not* (says he) *take that course that I could, to make it appear less odious, for divers were to have been brought out of danger, who now would rather hurt them otherwise. I do not think there would have been three worth the saving, that should have been lost.* And as to the rest, that were to have been swallowed up in that destruction, he seems not to have the least relenting in his mind about them. All doubts he seems not to have look'd upon as temptations, and intreats his Friends to pray for the pardoning of his not sufficient striving against temptations since this business was undertaken.

Good God! that any thing that is called Religion, should so perfectly strip them of all humanity, and transform the mild and gentle race of mankind into such Wolves and Tygers: that ever a pretended zeal for Thy glory should instigate men to dishonour Thee at such a rate! It is believed by many, and not without cause, that the Pope and his Faction are the *Antichrist*. I will say no more than I know in this matter; I am not so sure that it is he that is particularly designed in Scripture by that Name, as I am of the main Articles of the Christian Faith; But however that be, I challenge *Antichrist* himself, whoever he be, and whenever he comes, to do worse and wicked things than these.

But I must remember my *Text*, and take heed of imitating that Spirit which is there condemned, whilst I am inveighing against it. And in truth it almost looks uncharitably to speak the truth in these matters, and barely to relate what these men have not blush'd to do. I need not, nay I cannot, aggravate these things; they are too horrible in themselves, even when they are express'd in the softest and gentlest words.

I would not be understood to charge every particular person who is, or hath been in the *Roman* Communion, with the guilt of these or the like practices: But I must charge their Doctrines and Principles with them: I must charge the *Heads* of their Church, and the prevalent teaching and governing part of it, who are usually the contrivers and abettors, the executioners and applauders of these cursed Designs.

I do willingly acknowledge the great Piety and Charity of several persons who have lived and died in that Communion, as *Erasmus*, *Father Paul*, *Thuanus*, and many others; who had in truth more goodness than the Principles of that Religion do either incline men to, or allow of. And yet he that considers how universally almost the *Papists* in *Ireland* were engaged in that *Massacre*, which is still fresh in our memories, will find it very hard to determine how many degrees of innocency and good nature, or of coldness and indifferency in Religion, are necessary to overbalance the fury of a blind zeal and a misguided Conscience.

I doubt not but *Papists* are made like other men. Nature hath not generally given them such savage and cruel dispositions, but their Religion hath

hath made them so. Whereas true Christianity is not only the best, but the best-natur'd Institution in the world; and so far as any Church is departed from good nature, and become cruel and barbarous, so far is it degenerated from Christianity. I am loth to say it, and yet I am confident 'tis very true, That many *Papists* would have been excellent Persons and very good Men, if their Religion had not hindered them; if the Doctrines and Principles of their Church had not perverted and spoiled their natural Dispositions.

I speak not this to exasperate *You, worthy Patriots and the great Bulwark of our Religion*, to any *unreasonable or unnecessary*, much less *unchristian* Severities against them: No, let us not do like them; let us never do any thing for Religion that is contrary to it: But I speak it to awaken your care thus far, That if their *Priests* will always be putting these pernicious Principles into the minds of the *People*, effectual Provision may be made, that it may never be in their Power again to put them in practice. We have found by Experience, that ever since the *Reformation*, they have been continually pecking at the Foundations of our Peace and Religion: When God knows we have been so far from thirsting after their Blood, that we did not so much as desire their disquiet, but in order to our own necessary safety, and indeed to theirs.

And God be praised for those matchless Instances which we are able to give of the generous humanity and Christian temper of the *English Protestants*. After Queen *Mary's* Death, when the Protestant Religion was restored, Bishop *Bonner*, notwithstanding all his Cruelties and Butcheries, was permitted quietly to live and die among us. And after the *Treason* of this *Day*, nay at this very time, since the discovery of so barbarous a Design, and the highest Provocation in the World, by the treacherous Murder of one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, a very good Man and a most excellent Magistrate, who had been active in the discovery of this Plot; I say, after all this, and notwithstanding the continued and insupportable insolence of their Carriage and Behaviour, even upon this occasion, no Violence, nay not so much as any incivility, that I ever heard of, hath been offer'd to any of them. I would to God they would but seriously consider this one difference between our Religion and theirs, and which of them comes nearest to the *Wisdom which is from above*, which is *peaceable*, and *gentle*, and *full of mercy*. And I do heartily pray, and have good hopes, that upon this occasion God will open their eyes so far, as to convince a great many among them, that *that* cannot be the true Religion which inspires men with such barbarous minds.

I have now done, and if I have been transported upon this Argument somewhat beyond my usual temper, the Occasion of this *Day*, and our present circumstances, will, I hope, bear me out. I have expressed my self all along with a just sense, and with no unjust severity, concerning these horrid Principles and Practices; but yet with great pity and tenderness towards those miserably seduced Souls, who have been deluded by them, and ensnared in them. And I can truly say, as the *Roman* Orator did of himself upon another occasion, *Me natura misericordem, patria severum, crudellem nec patria nec natura esse voluit*. My nature inclines me to be tender and compassionate; a hearty zeal for our Religion, and concernment for the publick welfare of my Country, may perhaps have made me a little severe; but neither my natural disposition, nor the temper of the *English* Nation, nor the *Genius* of the *Protestant*, that is, the true *Christian* Religion, will allow me to be cruel.

For the future, Let us encourage our selves in the Lord our God; and commit our Cause, and the keeping of our Souls to Him in well doing: And, under God, let us leave it to the wisdom and care of His Majesty, and His two Houses of Parliament, to make a lasting Provision for the security of our Peace and Religion against all the secret contrivances and open attempts of these sons of violence. And let us remember those words of David, Psal. 37. 12, 13, 14, 15. *The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth: The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation: Their swords shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.*

And I hope, considering what God hath heretofore done, and hath now begun to do for us, we may take encouragement to our selves against all the Enemies of our Religion, which are confederated against us, in the words of the Prophet, Isa. 8. 9, 10. *Associate your selves, O ye People, and ye shall be broken in pieces, and give ear all ye of far Countries: Gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: Gird your selves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought: Speak the word and it shall not stand. FOR GOD IS WITH US.*

And now what remains, but to make our most devout and thankful acknowledgments to Almighty God, for the invaluable Blessing of our Reformed Religion, and for the miraculous Deliverance of this Day, and for the wonderful Discovery of the late horrid and barbarous Conspiracy against our Prince, our Peace, and our Religion?

To Him therefore, our most gracious and merciful God, our Shield, and our Rock, and our mighty Deliverer: *Who hath brought us out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the House of Bondage; and hath set us free from Popish Tyranny and Superstition, a Yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.*

Who hath from time to time, delivered us from the bloody and merciless designs of wicked and unreasonable men; and hath render'd all the plots and contrivances, the mischievous counsels and devices of these worse than Heathens, of none effect.

Who did as upon this Day, rescue our King and our Princes, our Nobles and the Heads of our Tribes, the Governours of our Church and the Judges of the Land, from that fearful Destruction which was ready to have swallowed them up.

Who still brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and hath hitherto preserved our Religion and Civil Interests to us, in despite of all the malicious and restless attempts of our Adversaries.

Unto that great God, who hath done so great things for us, and hath saved us by a mighty Salvation: *Who hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, and, we trust, will still deliver us: be glory and honour, thanksgiving and praise, from generation to generation. And let all the People say, Amen.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

First General Meeting

OF THE

Gentlemen & Others

Born within the

COUNTY of YORK.

E c 2

To

To my honoured

FRIENDS & COUNTRY-MEN,

Mr.	[<i>Hugh Frankland, Leonard Robinson, Abrah. Fothergil, William Fairfax, Thomas Johnson, John Hardesty,</i>]	Mr.	[<i>Gervas Wilcocks, George Pickering, Edward Duffield, John Topham, James Longbotham, Nathan. Holroyd.</i>]
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Stewards of the *Yorkshire* Feast.

GENTLEMEN,

THis Sermon, which was first Preached, and is now Published at your desires, I dedicate to your Names, to whose Prudence and Care the direction and management of this first General Meeting of our Country-men was committed; Heartily wishing that it may be some way serviceable to the healing of our unhappy Differences, and the restoring of Unity and Charity among Christians, especially those of the Protestant Reformed Religion. I am,

Gentlemen,

Your Affectionate Country-man
and humble Servant,

Fo. Tillotson.

SERMON

SERMON XX.

Preached at the First General Meeting of the
Gentlemen, and Others, in and near *LONDON*,
Born within the County of *YORK*.

JOHN XIII. 34, 35.

A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.

AS the Christian Religion in general is the best Philosophy and most perfect Institution of Life; containing in it the most entire and compleat System of moral Rules and Precepts that was ever yet extant in the World: so it peculiarly excels in the Doctrine of *Love* and *Charity*; earnestly recommending, strictly enjoining, and vehemently and almost perpetually pressing and inculcating the excellency and necessity of this best of Graces and Virtues; and propounding to us, for our imitation and encouragement, the most lively and heroical Example of kindness and charity that ever was, in the Life and Death of the great Founder of our Religion, *the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus the Son of God.*

So that the Gospel, as it hath in all other parts of our Duty, cleared the dimness and obscurity of *natural Light*, and supplied the imperfections of former *Revelations*, so doth it most eminently reign and triumph in this great and blessed virtue of *Charity*; in which all the Philosophy and Religions that had been before in the World, whether *Jewish* or *Pagan*, were so remarkably defective.

With great reason then doth our blessed Saviour call this a *new Commandment*, and assert it to himself as a thing peculiar to his Doctrine and Religion; considering how imperfectly it had been taught and how little it had been practised in the World before; *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.*

I shall reduce my Discourse upon these *Words* under these six Heads.

First, To enquire in what sense our Saviour calls this Commandment, of loving one another, a *new Commandment*.

Secondly, To declare to you the nature of this Commandment, by instancing in the chief Acts and Properties of Love.

Thirdly, To consider the degrees and measures of our Charity, with regard to the several Objects about which it is exercised.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Our Obligation to this Duty, not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewise from our own Nature, and from the Reasonableness and Excellency of the thing commanded.

Fifthly, The great *Example* which is here propounded to our imitation; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

Sixthly, and *Lastly*, The Place and Rank which this Precept holds in the Christian Religion. Our Saviour makes it the proper badge of a *Disciple*, the distinctive mark and character of our Profession; *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.*

I. *In what sense our Saviour calls this Commandment, of loving one another, a new Commandment*; Not that it is absolutely and altogether *New*, but upon some special accounts. For it is a branch of the ancient and primitive Law of Nature. *Aristotle* truly observes that upon grounds of natural kindred and likeness *all men are friends*, and kindly dispos'd towards one another. And it is a known Precept of the *Jewish Religion*, to *love our neighbour as our selves.*

In some sense then, it is *no new Commandment*; and so *St. John*, who was most likely to understand our Saviour's meaning in this particular, (all his preaching and writing being almost nothing else, but an inculcating of this one Precept) explains this matter, telling us that in several respects it was, and it was not a *new Commandment*, 1 Joh. 2. 7, 8. *Brethren, I write no new Commandment unto you, but that which ye had from the beginning, that is, from ancient times: But then he corrects himself; Again, πάλιν, but yet a new Commandment I write unto you.* So that though it was not absolutely *new*, yet upon divers considerable accounts it was so, and in a peculiar manner proper to the *Evangelical Institution*; and is in so express and particular a manner ascribed to the teaching of the *Holy Ghost*, which was conferr'd upon Christians by the Faith of the Gospel, as if they hardly needed any outward instruction and exhortation to that purpose, 1 Thess. 4. 9. *But as touching Brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye your selves are διδασκόμενοι, divinely taught and inspired to love one another.*

This Commandment then, of *loving one another*, is by our Lord and Saviour so much enlarged as to the *Object* of it, beyond what either the *Jews* or *Heathens* did understand it to be, extending to all mankind, and even to our greatest enemies; so greatly advanced and heightned as to the *Degree* of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another; so effectually taught, so mightily encouraged, so very much urged and insisted upon, that it may very well be called a *new Commandment*: for though it was not altogether unknown to mankind before, yet it was never so taught, so encouraged; never was such an illustrious Example given of it, never so much weight and stress laid upon it by any Philosophy or Religion that was before in the World.

II. I shall endeavour to declare to you the *Nature of this Commandment, or the Duty required by it*, And that will best be done, by instancing in the chief *Acts* and *Properties* of Love and Charity. As, *Humanity*, and kindness in all our carriage and behaviour towards one another; for Love smooths the dispositions of men, so that they are not apt to grate upon one another: Next, to *rejoice* in the good and happiness of one another, and to *grieve* at their evils and sufferings; for Love unites the interests of men so as to make them affected with what happens to another, as if it were in some sort their own case: Then, to contribute as much as in us lies to the happiness of one another, by relieving one another's wants, and redressing their Misfortunes:

Again,

Again, tenderness of their good name and reputation; a proneness to interpret all the words and actions of men to the best sense; patience and forbearance towards one another; and when differences happen, to manage them with all possible calmness and kindness, and to be ready to forgive and to be reconciled to one another; to pray one for another; and if occasion be, at least if the publick good of Christianity require it, to be ready to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to sacrifice our selves for the furtherance of their Salvation.

III. We will consider the *Degrees and measures of our Charity, with regard to the various Objects about which it is exercised.*

And as to the *negative* part of this Duty, it is to be extended equally towards all. We are not to hate or bear ill-will to any man, or to do him any harm or mischief; *Love worketh no evil to his neighbour.* Thus much charity we are to exercise towards all without any exception, without any difference.

And as to the *positive* part of this Duty, we should bear an universal good-will to all men, wishing every man's happiness, and praying for it as heartily as for our own: And if we be sincere herein, we shall be ready upon all occasions to procure and promote the welfare of all men. But the outward acts and testimonies of our Charity neither can be actually extended to all, nor ought to be all alike. We do not know the wants of all, and therefore our knowledge of persons, and of their conditions, doth necessarily limit the effects of our Charity within a certain compass; and of those we do know, we can but relieve a small part for want of ability. Whence it becomes necessary, that we set some rules to our selves for the more discreet ordering of our Charity; such as these; Cases of extremity ought to take place of all other. Obligations of Nature, and nearness of Relation, seem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindness, and upon the accounts of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the *Household of Faith* is to be peculiarly considered. And after these, the merit of the persons, and all circumstances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued: Those who labour in an honest calling, but are oppress'd with their charge; those who are fallen from a plentiful condition, especially by misfortune and the providence of God, without their own fault; those who have relieved others, and have been eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind; and lastly, those whose visible necessities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them: All these do challenge our more especial regard and consideration.

IV. We will consider our *Obligations to this Duty, not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewise from our own Nature, and from the reasonableness and excellency of the thing commanded.* This is the Commandment of the Son of God, who came down from Heaven with full Authority to declare the Will of God to us. And this is peculiarly *His Commandment*, which he urgeth upon his Disciples so earnestly, and so as if he almost required nothing else in comparison of this. *Joh. 15. 12. This is my commandment, that ye love one another: And Ver. 17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* As if this were the end of all his Precepts, and of his whole Doctrine, to bring us to the practice of this Duty. And so *S. John*, the loving and beloved Disciple, speaks of it as the great *Message* which the Son of God was to deliver to mankind, *1. Joh. 3. 11. This is the Message which ye have heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another. And Ver. 23. This is his Commandment,*

mandment, that we should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us Commandment. And Chap. 4. v. 21. This Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God loveth his brother also.

But besides the Authority of our Saviour, we have a precedent obligation to it from our own Nature, and from the Reasonableness and Excellency of the thing it self. The frame of our Nature disposeth us to it, and our inclination to Society, in which there can be no pleasure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindness. And *Equity* also calls for it, for that we our selves wish and expect kindness from others, is conviction enough to us that we owe it to others. The fulfilling of this Law is the great perfection of our Natures, the advancement and enlargement of our Souls, the chief ornament and beauty of a great mind. It makes us like to God, the best and most perfect and happiest Being, in that which is the prime excellency and happiness and glory of the Divine Nature.

And the advantages of this temper are unspeakable and innumerable. It freeth our souls from those unruly and troublesome and disquieting Passions which are the great torment of our Spirits; from Anger and Envy, from Malice and Revenge, from Jealousie and Discontent. It makes our minds calm and chearful, and puts our souls into an easie posture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the possession and enjoyment of our selves: It preserves men from many mischiefs and inconveniences, to which enmity and ill-will do perpetually expose them: It is apt to make Friends, and to gain Enemies; and to render every condition either pleasant, or easie, or tolerable to us. So that to love others, is the truest love to our selves, and doth redound to our own unspeakable benefit and advantage in all respects.

It is a very considerable part of our Duty, and almost equall'd by our Saviour with the *first and great Commandment of the Law*. It is highly acceptable to God, most beneficial to others, and very comfortable to our selves. It is the easiest of all Duties, and it makes all others easie; the pleasure of it makes the pains to signifie nothing, and the delightful reflexion upon it afterwards is a most ample reward of it. It is a Duty in every man's power to perform, how strait and indigent soever his fortune and condition be. The poorest man may be as charitable as a Prince; he may have as much kindness in his heart, though his hand cannot be so bountiful and munificent. Our Saviour instanceth in the giving of a *cup of cold water*, as a Charity that will be highly accepted and rewarded by God. And one of the most celebrated Charities that ever was, how small was it for the matter of it, and yet how great in regard of the mind that gave it? I mean the Widow's *two mites*, which she *cast into the Treasury*: One could hardly give less, and yet none can give more, for she gave *all that she had*. All these excellencies and advantages of Love and Charity, which I have briefly recounted, are so many Arguments, so many Obligations to the practice of this Duty.

V. We will consider *the great instance and example which is here propounded to our imitation*; As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. The Son of God's becoming Man, his whole life, his bitter death and passion, all that he did, and all that he suffered, was one great and continued proof and evidence of his mighty love to mankind. The greatest instance of love among men, and that too but very rare, is for a man to lay down his life for another, for his Friend; but the Son of God died for all mankind, and we were all his enemies. And should we not chearfully imitate the example of that great

great Love and Charity, the effects whereof are so comfortable. so beneficial, so happy to every one of us. Had he not loved us, and died for us, we had certainly perish'd, we had been miserable and undone to all eternity.

And to perpetuate this great Example of Charity, and that it might be always fresh in our memories, the great Sacrament of our Religion was on purpose instituted for the commemoration of this great love of the Son of God, in laying down his life, and shedding his precious blood for the wicked and rebellious race of Mankind. But I have not time to enlarge upon this noble Argument as it deserves.

VI. The last thing to be consider'd is, *the place and rank which this Precept and Duty holds in the Christian Religion.* Our blessed Saviour here makes it the proper badge and cognisance of our Profession; *By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* The different Sects among the Jews had some peculiar Character to distinguish them from one another. The Scholars of the several great Rabbis among them had some peculiar Sayings and Opinions, some Customs and Traditions whereby they were severally known: And so likewise the Disciples of John the Baptist were particularly remarkable for their great Austerities. In allusion to these distinctions of Sects and Schools among the Jews, our Saviour fixeth upon this mark and character whereby his Disciples should be known from the Disciples of any other Institution, *A mighty love and affection to one another.*

Other Sects were distinguish'd by little Opinions, or by some external Rites and Observances in Religion; but our Saviour pitcheth upon that which is the most real and substantial, the most large and extensive, the most useful and beneficial, the most humane and the most divine quality of which we are capable.

This was his great Commandment to his Disciples, before he left the World: This was the Legacy he left them, and the effect of his last Prayers for them: And for this end among others, he instituted the Sacrament of his blessed Body and Blood, to be a lively remembrance of his great Charity to mankind, and a perpetual bond of Love and Union amongst his Followers.

And the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour do upon all occasions recommend this to us, as a principal Duty and Part of our Religion; telling us, That in Christ Jesus, that is, in the Christian Religion nothing will avail, no not Faith it self, unless it be enlivened and inspired by Charity; That Love is the end of the Commandment, *ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ*, the end of the Evangelical declaration, the first Fruit of the Spirit, the spring and root of all those Graces and Virtues which concern our duty towards one another: That it is that sum and abridgement, the accomplishment and fulfilling of the whole Law: That without this, whatever we pretend to in Christianity, we are nothing, and our Religion is vain: That this is the greatest of all Graces and Virtues, greater than Faith and Hope; and of perpetual use and duration. *Charity never fails.*

And therefore they exhort above all things to endeavour after it, as the Crown of all other Virtues: *Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves,* saith St. Peter: And St. Paul, having enumerated most other Christian Virtues, exhorts us above all to strive after this, *And above all these things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfection.* This St. John makes one of the most certain signs of our love to God, and the want of it an undeniable argument of the contrary: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he*

bath not seen? This he declares to be one of the best evidences that we are in a state of Grace and Salvation, Hereby we know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the Brethren.

So that, well might our blessed Saviour chuse this for the badge of his Disciples, and make it the great Precept of the best and most perfect Institution: Other things might have served better for pomp and ostentation, and have more gratified the Curiosity, or Enthusiasm, or Superstition of mankind, but there is no quality in the World which; upon a sober and impartial consideration, is of a more solid and intrinsick value.

And in the first Ages of Christianity, the Christians were very eminent for this Virtue, and particularly noted for it: *Notis notam inurit apud quosdam, it is a mark and brand set upon us by some, saith Tertullian*; and he tells us, that it was proverbially said among the *Heathen*, *Behold how these Christians love one another*. *Lucian*, that great scoffer at all Religion, acknowledgeth in behalf of Christians, that this was the great Principle which their Master had instill'd into them. And *Julian*, the bitterest enemy that Christianity ever had, could not forbear to propound to the *Heathen* for an example the charity of the *Galileans*; for so, by way of reproach, he calls the *Christians*; who (says he) gave themselves up to humanity and kindness; which he acknowledgeth to have been very much to the advantage and reputation of our Religion: And in the same Letter to *Arsacius*, the *Heathen* High Priest of *Galatia*, he gives this memorable Testimony of the *Christians*, that their Charity was not limited and confin'd only to themselves, but extended even to their Enemies; which could not be said either of the *Jews* or *Heathens*: His words are these, *It is a shame, that when the Jews suffer none of theirs to beg, and the impious Galileans relieve not only their own, but those also of our Religion, that we only should be defective in so necessary a Duty*. By all which it is evident that Love and Charity is not only the great Precept of our Saviour, but was in those first and blest Times the general practice of his Discip'les, and acknowledged by the *Heathens* as a very peculiar and remarkable quality in them.

The application I shall make of this discourse shall be threefold.

1. With relation to the Church of *Rome*.
2. With regard to our selves who profess the *Protestant* Reform'd Religion.
3. With a more particular respect to the occasion of this Meeting.

I. First, *With relation to the Church of Rome*; Which we cannot chuse but think of, whenever we speak of Charity and loving one another; especially having had so late a Discovery of their affection to us, and so considerable a testimony of the kindness and charity which they designed towards us: such as may justly make the ears of all that hear it to tingle, and render *Papery* execrable and infamous, a frightful and hateful thing to the end of the World.

It is now but too visible how grossly this great Commandment of our Saviour is contradicted, not only by the Practices of those in that Communion, from the *Pope* down to the meanest *Friar*; but by the very Doctrines and Principles, by the *Genius* and Spirit of that Religion, which is wholly calculated for cruelty and persecution. Where now is that mark of a Disciple, so much insisted upon by our Lord and Master, to be found in that Church? And yet what is the *Christian* Church but the Society and Community of *Christ's* Disciples? Surely in all reason, that which our Lord made the distinctive Mark and Character of his Disciples, should be the principal mark of a true Church. *Bellarmino* reckons up no less than fifteen marks of the true Church

Church, all which the Church of *Rome* arrogates to her self alone : But he wisely forgot that which is worth all the rest, and which our Saviour insists upon as the chief of all other, *A sincere Love and Charity to all Christians* : This he knew would by no means agree to his own Church.

But for all that, it is very reasonable that Churches as well as particular Christians should be judged by their Charity. The Church of *Rome* would engross all Faith to her self : Faith in its utmost perfection, to the degree and pitch of Infallibility ; and they allow no Body in the World, besides themselves, no though they believe all the Articles of the Apostles Creed, to have one grain of true Faith ; because they do not believe upon the Authority of their Church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true Faith. This is a most arrogant and vain pretence ; but admit it were true, yet in the Judgment of St. Paul, *though they had all faith, if they have not charity, they are nothing.*

The greatest wonder of all is this, that they who hate and persecute Christians most, do all this while, the most confidently of all others, pretend to be the Disciples of Christ, and will allow none to be so but themselves. That Church which excommunicates all other Christian Churches in the world, and if she could, would extirpate them out of the world, will yet needs assume to her self to be the only Christian Church : As if our Saviour had said, *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye hate, and excommunicate, and kill one another : What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? thou empty and impudent pretence of Christianity!*

II. Secondly, *With relation to our selves, who profess the Protestant Reformed Religion.* How is this great Precept of our Saviour not only shamefully neglected, but plainly violated by us? And that not only by private hatred and ill-will, quarrels and contentions in our civil conversation and intercourse with one another ; but by most unchristian divisions and animosities in that common relation wherein we stand to one another, as Brethren, as Christians, as Protestants.

Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? And are we not in a more peculiar and eminent manner brethren, being all the Children of God by faith in Jesus Christ? Are we not all members of the same Body, and partakers of the same Spirit, and Heirs of the same blessed Hopes of eternal life.

So that being Brethren upon so many accounts, and by so many bonds and endearments all united one to another, and all travelling towards the same heavenly Country, *why do we fall out by the way, since we be Brethren?* Why do we, not as becomes Brethren, dwell together in unity? but are so apt to quarrel and break out into heats, to crumble into Sects and Parties, to divide and separate from one another upon every slight and trifling occasion.

Give me leave a little more fully to expostulate this matter ; but very calmly and in the spirit of meekness, and in the name of our dear Lord who loved us at such a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this new Commandment of his, *that ye love one another* : Which is almost a new Commandment still, and hardly the worse for wearing ; so seldom is it put on, and so little hath it been practised among Christians for several Ages.

Consider seriously with your selves ; ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our union in the Doctrines of the Christian Religion and in all the necessary Articles of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, in the same Sacraments, and in all the substantial parts of God's worship,

and in the great Duties and Virtues of the Christian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful Opinions, and in little Rites and Circumstances of Worship to divide and break us?

Are not the things, about which we differ, in their nature *indifferent*? that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wise men? Are they not at a great distance from the life and essence of Religion, and rather good or bad as they tend to the Peace and Unity of the Church, or are made use of to Schism and Faction, than either necessary or evil in themselves? And shall little scruples weigh so far with us, as, by breaking the Peace of the Church about them, to endanger our whole Religion? Shall we take one another by the throat for a hundred pence, when our common adversary stands ready to clap upon us an action of ten thousand talents? Can we in good earnest be contented that rather than the Surplice should not be thrown out, Popery should come in; and rather than receive the Sacrament in the humble, but indifferent, posture of kneeling, to swallow the Camel of Transubstantiation, and adore the Elements of Bread and Wine for our God and Saviour? and rather than to submit to a Set Form of Prayer, to have the Service of God perform'd in an unknown Tongue?

Are we not yet made sensible, at least in this our day, by so clear a Demonstration as the Providence of God hath lately given us: and had not He been infinitely merciful to us, might have proved the dearest and most dangerous Experiment that ever was: I say, are we not yet convinced, what mighty advantages our Enemies have made of our Divisions, and what a plentiful harvest they have had among us, during our Differences, and upon occasion of them; and how near their Religion was to have entered in upon us at once, at those wide breaches which we had made for it? And will we still take counsel of our Enemies, and chuse to follow that course, to which, of all other, they who hate us and seek our ruin would most certainly advise and direct us? Will we freely offer them that advantage which they would be contented to purchase at any rate?

Let us, after all our sad experience, at last take Warning to keep a steadfast eye upon our chief Enemy, and not suffer our selves to be diverted from the consideration and regard of our greatest danger by the petty provocations of our Friends; so I chuse to call those who dissent from us in lesser matters, because I would fain have them so, and they ought in all reason to be so: But however they behave themselves, we ought not much to mind those who only sling dirt at us, whilst we are sure there are others who fly at our throats, and strike at our very hearts.

Let us learn this wisdom of our Enemies, who, though they have many great differences among themselves, yet they have made a shift, at this time, to unite together to destroy us: And shall not we do as much to save our selves?

— *fas est & ab hoste doceri.*

It was a Principle among the ancient Romans, a brave and wise People, *donare inimicitias Reip.* to give up and sacrifice their private enmities and quarrels to the publick good and the safety of the Commonwealth. And is it not to every considerate man as clear as the Sun at Noon-day, that nothing can maintain and support the Protestant Religion amongst us, and found our Church upon a Rock; so that when the rain falls, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon it, it shall stand firm and unshaken: That nothing can be a bulwark of sufficient force to resist all the arts and attempts of Popery

pery, but an *establish'd National Religion*, firmly united and compacted in all the parts of it? Is it not plain to every eye, that little *Setts* and *separate Congregations* can never do it? but will be like a Foundation of *sand* to a weighty Building, which whatever Shew it may make cannot stand long, because it wants Union at the Foundation, and for that reason must necessarily want strength and firmness.

It is not for private persons to undertake in matters of publick concernment; but I think we have no cause to doubt but the Governours of our Church (notwithstanding all the advantages of Authority, and we think of Reason too on our side) are Persons of that Piety and Prudence, that for Peace sake, and in order to a firm Union among Protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things; but to yield them up, whether to the infirmity or importunity, or perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us.

But then surely, on the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable disposition, and a mind ready to comply with the Church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawful things; and desirous, upon any terms that are tolerable, to return to the Communion of it: a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples; not apt to insist upon little cavils and objections to which the very best things, and the greatest and the clearest Truths in the World are and always will be liable: And whatever they have been heretofore, to be *henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.*

And if we were thus affected on all hands, we might yet be a happy Church and Nation; if we would govern our selves by these Rules, and walk according to them, *Peace would be upon us, and mercy, and on the Israel of God.*

III. *Thirdly*, I shall conclude all with a few words in relation to the occasion of this present meeting. I have all this while been recommending to you, from the Authority and Example of our blessed Saviour, and from the nature and reason of the thing it self, this most excellent Grace and Virtue of Charity, in the most proper Acts and Instances of it: But besides particular Acts of Charity to be exercised upon emergent occasions, there are likewise charitable Customs which are highly commendable, because they are more certain and constant, of a larger extent, and of a longer continuance; As the Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, which is now form'd and establish'd into a *charitable Corporation*: And the Anniversary Meetings of those of the several Counties of England, who reside, or happen to be in London; for two of the best and noblest ends that can be, the maintaining of Friendship, and the promoting of Charity. These, and others of the like kind, I call *charitable Customs*, which of late years have very much obtained in this great and famous City. And it cannot but be a great pleasure and satisfaction to all good men, to see so generous, so humane, so Christian a disposition to prevail and reign so much amongst us.

The strange overflowing of Vice and Wickedness in our Land, and the prodigious increase and impudence of infidelity and impiety, hath of late years boaded very ill to us, and brought terrible Judgments upon this City and Nation, and seems still to threaten us with more and greater: And the greatest comfort I have had, under these sad apprehensions of God's displeasure, hath been this, that though *bad men* were perhaps never worse
in

in any Age, yet the *good*, who I hope are not a few, were never more truly and substantially good. I do verily believe, there never were, in any time, greater and more real effects of Charity; not from a blind superstition, and an ignorant zeal, and a mercenary and arrogant and presumptuous principle of Merit, but from a sound knowledge, and a sincere love and obedience to God, or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

And who, that loves God and Religion, can chuse but take great contentment to see so general and forward an inclination in People this way: which hath been very much cherished of late years by this sort of Meetings: and that to very good purpose and effect, in many charitable contributions disposed in the best and wisest ways: and which likewise hath tended very much to the reconciling of the minds of men, and the allaying of those fierce heats and animosities which have been caused by our Civil confusions and Religious distractions. For there is nothing many times wanting to take away prejudice, and to extinguish hatred and ill-will, but an opportunity for men to see and understand one another; by which they will quickly perceive, that they are not such Monsters as they have been represented one to another at a distance.

We are, I think, one of the last Counties of *England* that have entred into this friendly and charitable kind of Society; Let us make amends for our late setting out by quickning our pace, that so we may overtake and outstrip those who are gone before us: Let not our Charity partake of the coldness of our Climate, but let us endeavour that it may be equal to the extent of our Country; and as we are incomparably the greatest County of *England*, let it appear that we are so by the largeness and extent of our Charity.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing, send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity, the very bond of Peace, and of all Virtues: Without which who-soever liveth, is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

Preached at *White-hall*, April 4. 1679.

I JOHN IV. 1.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.

THIS caution and counsel was given upon occasion of the false Prophets and Teachers that were risen up in the beginning of the *Christian Church*, who endeavoured to seduce men from the true Doctrine of the Gospel delivered by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour. And these teaching contrary things, could not both be from God; and therefore St. *John* calls upon Christians to examine the Doctrines and Pretences of those new Teachers, whether they were from God or not: *Believe not every Spirit; that is, not every one that takes upon him to be inspired and to be a Teacher come from God: But try the Spirits; that is, examine those that make this pretence, whether it be real or not; and examine the Doctrines which they bring, because there are many Impostors abroad in the World.*

This is the plain sense of the Words: In which there are contained these four Propositions.

First, *That men may, and often do, falsely pretend to Inspiration.* And this is the reason upon which the Apostle grounds this Exhortation: *Because many false Prophets are gone out into the World; therefore we should try who are true, and who are false.*

Secondly, *We are not to believe every one that pretends to be inspired, and to teach a Divine Doctrine:* This follows upon the former; because men may falsely pretend to Inspiration; therefore we are not to believe every one that makes this pretence. For any man that hath but confidence enough, and conscience little enough, may pretend to come from God. And if we admit all pretences of this kind, we lie at the mercy of every crafty and confident man to be led by him into what delusions he pleaseth.

Thirdly, *Neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God.* This is sufficiently implied in the Text; for when the Apostle says, *believe not every Spirit*, he supposeth we are to believe some; and when he saith, *try the Spirits whether they be of God*, he supposeth some to be of God, and that those which are so are to be believed. These Three Observations are so plain, that I need only to name them to make way for the

Fourth, Which I principally designed to insist upon from these Words. And that is this, *That there is some way to discern mere pretenders to Inspiration, from those who are truly and divinely inspired:* And this is necessarily implied in the Apostle's bidding us to *try the Spirits whether they are of God*, For it were

were in vain to make any trial, if there be no way to discern between pretended and real Inspiration.

Now the handling of this will give occasion to two very material Enquiries and useful to be resolved.

I. *How we may discern between true and counterfeit Doctrines*: those which really are from God, and those which only pretend to be so?

II. *To whom this judgment of discerning doth appertain?*

I. *How we may discern between true and counterfeit Doctrines and Revelations*: for the clearing of this I shall lay down these following Propositions.

1. *That Reason is the faculty whereby Revelations are to be discerned*; or to use the phrase in the Text, it is that whereby we are to judge what Spirits are of God, and what not. For all Revelation from God supposeth us to be Men, and to be endued with Reason; and therefore it does not create new Faculties in us, but propounds new Objects to that Faculty which was in us before. Whatever Doctrines God reveals to men are propounded to their Understandings, and by this Faculty we are to examine all Doctrines which pretend to be from God, and upon examination to judge whether there be reason to receive them as Divine, or to reject them as Impostures.

2. *All supernatural Revelation supposeth the truth of the Principles of Natural Religion*. We must first be assured that there is a God, before we can know that he hath made any Revelation of himself: and we must know that his Words are true, otherwise there were no sufficient reason to believe the Revelations which he makes to us: and we must believe his Authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his Laws, and punish our breach of them; otherwise there would neither be sufficient obligation nor encouragement to Obedience. These and many other things are supposed to be true, and naturally known to us, antecedently to all supernatural Revelation; otherwise the Revelations of God would signify nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.

3. *All Reasonings about Divine Revelations must necessarily be governed by the Principles of Natural Religion*: that is, by those apprehensions which men naturally have of the Divine perfections, and by the clear Notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our Natures. Because we have no other way to judge what is worthy of God, and credible to be revealed by him, and what not, but by the natural Notions which we have of God and of his essential Perfections: which, because we know him to be immutable, we have reason to believe he will never contradict. And by these Principles likewise, we are to interpret what God hath revealed; and when any doubt ariseth concerning the meaning of any divine Revelation (as that of the Holy Scriptures) we are to govern our selves, in the interpretation of it, by what is most agreeable to those natural Notions which we have of God, and we have all the reason in the World to reject that sense which is contrary thereto. For instance, when God is represented in Scripture as having a human shape, eyes, ears and hands, the Notions which men naturally have of the Divine Nature and Perfections do sufficiently direct us to interpret these expressions in a sense worthy of God, and agreeable to his Perfection: And therefore it is reasonable to understand them as rather spoken to our capacity, and in a Figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other cases.

4. *Nothing*

4. Nothing ought to be received as a Revelation from God which plainly contradicts the Principles of Natural Religion, or overthrows the certainty of them. For instance, it were in vain to pretend a Revelation from God, *That there is no God*, because this is a contradiction in terms.

So likewise to pretend a command from God, *That we are to hate and despise him*; because it is not credible that God should require any thing of Reasonable Creatures so unsuitable to their Natures, and to their Obligations to him; Besides that such a Law as this does tacitly involve a contradiction; because upon such a supposition, to despise God would be to obey him; and yet to obey him is certainly to honour him. So that in this case to honour God, and to despise him, would be the same thing, and equal contempts of him. In like manner it would be vain to pretend any Revelation from God, *That there is no life after this, nor rewards and punishments in another World*: because this is contrary to those natural apprehensions which have generally possessed mankind, and would take away the main force and sanction of the Divine Laws. The like may be said concerning any pretended Revelation from God, which evidently contradicts those natural Notions which men have of good and evil; as, *That God should command, or allow Sedition and Rebellion, Perfidiousness and Perjury*; because the practice of these would be apparently destructive of the peace and happiness of Mankind, and would naturally bring confusion into the World: But God is not the God of Confusion, but of Order, which St. Paul appeals to as a Principle naturally known. Upon the same account nothing ought to be entertained as a Divine Revelation which overthrows the certainty of the Principles of natural Religion; because that would take away the certainty of Divine Revelation it self, which supposeth the truth of those principles. For instance, whoever pretends any Revelation that brings the Providence of God into question, does by that very thing make such a Revelation questionable. For if God take no care of the World, have no concernment for humane affairs, why should we believe that he makes any Revelation of his Will to men? And by this Principle Moses will have false Prophets to be tried: *Deut. 13. 1. If there arise among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet*: And he gives the reason of this, *ver. 5. Because he hath spoken unto you to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the Land of Egypt*. Here is a case wherein a false Prophet is supposed to work a true Miracle to give credit to his doctrine (which in other cases the Scripture makes the sign of a true Prophec) but yet in this case he is to be rejected as an Impostor: Because the Doctrine he teacheth would draw men off from the worship of the true God who is naturally known, and had manifested himself to the People of Israel in so miraculous a manner, by bringing them out of the Land of Egypt. So that a Miracle is not enough to give credit to a Prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural Notion which men have, *That there is but one God, who only ought to be worshipped*.

5. Nothing ought to be received as a Divine Doctrine and Revelation, without good evidence that it is so: that is, without some Argument sufficient to satisfy a prudent and considerate man. Now (supposing there be nothing in the matter of the Revelation that is evidently contrary to the Principles of Natural Religion, nor to any former Revelation which hath already received a greater and more solemn attestation from God) Miracles are owned by all Mankind to be a sufficient Testimony to any Person, or Doctrine, that they are from God. This was the Testimony which God gave to Moses to

satisfy the People of *Israël* that he had sent him; *Exod. 4. 1, 2. Moses said, They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God endues him with a power of Miracles, to be an evidence to them, *That they may believe that the God of their Fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee,* And all along in the *Old Testament*, when God sent his Prophets to make a new Revelation, or upon any strange and extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them by some Sign or Wonder which they foretold or wrought. And when he sent his *Son* into the World, he gave Testimony to him by innumerable great and unquestionable Miracles, more and greater than *Moses* and all the Prophets had wrought. And there was great reason for this: because our Saviour came not only to publish a new Religion to the World, but to put an end to that Religion which God had instituted before. And now that the Gospel hath had the confirmation of such Miracles as never were wrought upon any other occasion, no Evidence inferiour to this can in reason controul this Revelation, or give credit to any thing contrary to it. And therefore though the false Prophets and Antichrists, foretold by our Saviour, did really work Miracles, yet they were so inconsiderable in comparison of our Saviour's, that they deserve no credit in opposition to that Revelation which had so clear a Testimony given to it from Heaven by Miracles, besides all other concurring Arguments to confirm it.

6. And lastly, *No Argument is sufficient to prove a Doctrine or Revelation to be from God, which is not clearer and stronger than the Difficulties and Objections against it:* Because all Assent is grounded upon Evidence, and the strongest clearest evidence always carries it: But where the evidence is equal on both sides, that can produce nothing but a suspense and doubt in the mind whether the thing be true or not. If *Moses* had not confuted *Pharaoh's* Magicians by working Miracles which they could not work, they might reasonably have disputed it with him, who had been the true Prophet: But when he did Works plainly above the power of their Magick and the Devil to do, then they submitted and acknowledged that *there was the Finger of God.* So likewise, though a person work a Miracle (which ordinarily is a good evidence that he is sent by God) yet if the Doctrine he brings be plainly contrary to those natural Notions which we have of God, this is a better objection against the truth of this Doctrine than the other is a proof of it; as is plain in the case which *Moses* puts, *Deut. 13.* which I mentioned before.

Upon the same account no man can reasonably believe the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* to be revealed by God; because every man hath as great evidence that *Transubstantiation* is false, as any man can pretend to have that God hath revealed any such thing. Suppose *Transubstantiation* to be part of the Christian Doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is *Miracles*: But of all Doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which a man hath of the truth of the Miracle, he hath of the falshood of the Doctrine, *that is,* the clear evidence of his senses for both. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove, *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not bread, but the body of Christ,* he hath only the evidence of his senses; and he hath the very same evidence to prove, *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not the body of Christ, but bread.* So that here ariseth a new controversy, whether a man should believe his senses giving testimony against the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or bearing testimony to the Miracle which is wrought to confirm that Doctrine:

For

For there is just the same evidence against the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle. So that the Argument for Transubstantiation, and the Objection against it, do just balance one another; and where the weights in both Scales are equal, it is impossible that the one should weigh down the other: and consequently Transubstantiation is not to be proved by a Miracle; for that would be, *to prove to a man by something that he sees, that he does not see what he sees.*

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to give satisfaction to the *first* Enquiry I propounded, *viz.* How we may discern between true and counterfeit Revelations and Doctrines: I proceed now to the

II. *To whom this judgment of discerning does appertain.* Whether to Christians in general, or to some particular Person or Persons, authorized by God to judge for the rest of mankind, by whose judgment all men are concluded and bound up. And this is an enquiry of no small Importance; because it is one of the most fundamental Points in difference between Us and the Church of Rome. And however in many particular Controversies, as concerning *Transubstantiation, the Communion in one kind, the service of God in an unknown Tongue, the business of Indulgences, the Invocation of Saints, the Worship of Images,* they are not able to offer any thing that is fit to move a reasonable and considerate man; yet in this Controversie, concerning the Judge of Controversies, they are not destitute of some specious appearance of Reason which deserves to be weighed and considered. Therefore that we may examine this matter to the bottom, I shall do these three things.

1. Lay down some Cautions and Limitations whereby we may understand how far the generality of Christians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion.

2. I shall represent the grounds of this Principle.

3. Endeavour to satisfy the main Objections of our Adversaries against it: And likewise to shew, that there is no such reason and necessity for an universal infallible Judge as they pretend.

I. I shall lay down some Cautions and Limitations, by which we may understand how far the generality of Christians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion.

First, Private Persons are only to judge for themselves, and not to impose their Judgment upon others, as if they had any Authority over them. And this is reasonable, because if it were otherwise, a Man would deprive others of that Liberty which he assumes to himself, and which he can claim upon no other account, but because it belongs to others equally with himself.

Secondly, This liberty of judging is not so to be understood as to take away the necessity and use of Guides and Teachers in Religion. Nor can this be denied to be a reasonable limitation; because the knowledge of *Revealed Religion* is not a thing born with us, nor ordinarily supernaturally infused into men; but is to be learned as other things are. And if it be to be learned, there must be some to teach and instruct others: And they that will learn must be modest and humble; and in those things, of which they are no competent Judges, they must give credit to their Teachers, and trust their skill: For instance, every unlearned man is to take it upon the credit of those who are skilful, that the Scriptures are truly and faithfully translated

lated; and for the understanding of obscure Texts of Scripture, and more difficult Points in Religion, he is to rely upon those, whose proper business and employment it is, to apply themselves to the understanding of these things. For in these cases every man is not capable of judging himself, and therefore he must necessarily trust others: And in all other things he ought to be modest; and unless it be in plain matters, which every man can judge of, he ought rather to distrust himself than his Teacher.

And this respect may be given to a Teacher, without either supposing him to be infallible, or making an absolute resignation of my judgment to him. A man may be a very able Teacher (suppose of the Mathematicks) and fit to have the respect which is due to a Teacher, tho' he be not infallible in those Sciences: and because Infallibility is not necessary to such a Teacher, it is neither necessary nor convenient, that I should absolutely resign up my Judgment to him. For though I have reason to credit him, within the compass of his Art, in things which I do not know, I am not therefore bound to believe him in things plainly contrary to what I and all mankind do certainly know. For example, if upon pretence of his skill in Arithmetick, which I am learning of him, he should tell me, *That twice two do not make four, but five*; though I believed him to be the best Mathematician in the World, yet I cannot believe him in this thing: Nor is there reason I should; because I did not come to learn this of him, but knew as much of that before as he or any man else could tell me. The case is the same in matters of Religion; in which there are some things so plain, and lie so level to all capacities, that every man is almost equally judge of them: As I shall have occasion farther to shew by and by.

Thirdly, Neither does this liberty of judging exempt men from a due submission and obedience to their Teachers and Governours. Every man is bound to obey the lawful Commands of his Governours; and what by publick Consent and Authority is determined and established, ought not to be gainsaid by private Persons, but upon very clear evidence of the falshood or unlawfulness of it. And this is every man's duty, for the maintaining of Order, and out of regard to the Peace and Unity of the Church; which is not to be violated upon every scruple and frivolous pretence: And when men are perverse and disobedient, Authority is Judge, and may restrain and punish them.

Fourthly, Nor do I so far extend this Liberty of judging in Religion, as to think every man fit to dispute the Controversies of Religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of so mean capacity as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good Argument, much less of the issue of a long Dispute; and such Persons ought not to engage in disputes of Religion: but to beg God's direction, and to rely upon their Teachers; and above all to live up to the plain dictates of natural Light, and the clear commands of God's Word, and this will be their best security. And if the Providence of God hath placed them under such Guides as do seduce them into Error, their ignorance is invincible, and God will not condemn them for it, so long as they sincerely endeavour to do the will of God so far as they know it. And this being the case of many, especially in the Church of *Rome*, where ignorance is so industriously cherished, I have so much charity as to hope well concerning many of them: And seeing *that* Church teaches and enjoins the people to worship Images, it is in some sense charitably done of them, not to let them know the Second Commandment, that they may not be guilty of sinning against so plain a Law.

Having premised these Cautions, I proceed in the

II. Place, To represent to you the grounds of this Principle of our Religion, viz. That we allow private persons to judge for themselves in matters of Religion.

First, Because many things in Religion, especially those which are most necessary to be believed and practised, are so plain, that every man of ordinary capacity, after competent instruction in matters of Religion (which is always to be supposed) can as well judge of them for himself, as any man, or company of men in the world can judge for him. Because in these he hath a plain Rule to go by, *Natural Light* and clear *Revelation*, of *Scripture*. And this is no new Principle of the *Protestants*, but most expressly owned by the *Ancient Fathers*, *Whatever things are necessary, are plain*, saith *St. Chrysostom*. *All things are plainly contained in Scripture which concern faith and a good life*, saith *St. Austin*. And nothing can be more reasonable, than that those things which are plain to every man should be left to every man's judgment. For every man can judge of what is plain; of evident Truth and Falshood, Virtue and Vice, of Doctrines and Laws plainly delivered in Scripture, if we believe any thing to be so, which is next to madness to deny. I will refer it to no man's Judgment upon earth to determine for me, *Whether there be a God or not? Whether Murder and Perjury be Sins? Whether it be not plain in Scripture, That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, That he became man, and died for us, and rose again?* So that there is no need of a Judge in these cases. Nor can I possibly believe any man to be so absolutely infallible, as not to call his Infallibility into question, if he determines any thing contrary to what is plain and evident to all mankind. For if he should determine that there is no God, or that he is not to be worshipped, or that he will not punish and reward men, or, which is the case that *Bellarmino* puts, that *Virtue is Vice, and Vice Virtue*; he would hereby take away the very foundation of Religion; and how can I look upon him any longer as a Judge in matters of Religion, when there can be no such thing as Religion if he have judged and determined right?

Secondly, The Scripture plainly allows this liberty to particular and private Persons to judge for themselves. And for this I need go no farther than my Text, which bids men try the Spirits whether they be of God. I do not think this is spoken only to the Pope or a General Council, but to Christians in general: for to these the *Apostle* writes. Now if *St. John* had believed that God had constituted an infallible Judge in his Church, to whose Sentence and Determination all Christians are bound to submit, he ought in all reason to have referred Christians to him for the trial of Spirits, and not have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine these things. But it seems *St. Paul* was likewise of the same mind; and tho' he was guided by an infallible Spirit, yet he did not expect that men should blindly submit to his Doctrine: Nay, so far is he from that, that he commends the *Bereans* for that very thing for which I dare say the Church of *Rome* would have check'd them most severely, namely, for searching the Scriptures to see whether those things which the Apostles deliver'd were so or not: This liberty *St. Paul* allowed; and tho' he was inspired by God, yet he treated those whom he taught like men. And indeed, it were a hard case that a necessity of believing Divine Revelations, and rejecting Impostures, should be imposed upon Christians; and yet the liberty of judging, whether a Doctrine be from God or not, should be taken away from them.

Thirdly, Our Adversaries themselves are forced to grant that which in effect is as much as we contend for. For tho' they deny a liberty of judging in particular points of Religion, yet they are forced to grant men a liberty

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of judging upon the *whole*. When they of the Church of *Rome* would persuade a *Jew*, or a *Heathen*, to become a Christian; or a *Heretick* (as they are pleased to call us) to come over to the Communion of their Church, and offer arguments to induce them thereunto; they do by this very thing, whether they will or no, make that man Judge *which is the true Church, and the true Religion*. Because it would be ridiculous to persuade a man to turn to their Religion, and to urge him with Reasons to do so, and yet to deny him the use of his own judgment whether their Reasons be sufficient to move them to make such a change. Now, as the *Apostle* reasons in another case, if men be fit to judge for themselves in so great and important a matter as the choice of their Religion, why should they be thought *unworthy to judge in lesser matters*? They tell us indeed that a man may use his judgment in the choice of his Religion; but when he hath once chosen, he is then for ever to resign up his judgment to their Church: But what tolerable reason can any man give, why a man should be fit to judge upon the *whole*, and yet unfit to judge upon *particular Points*? especially if it be considered, that no man can make a discreet judgment of any Religion, before he hath examined the particular Doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning them. Is it credible, that God should give a man judgment in the most fundamental and important matter of all, viz *To discern the true Religion, and the true Church, from the false*; for no other end, but to enable him to chuse once for all to whom he should resign and enslave his judgment for ever? which is just as reasonable as if one should say, that God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out once for all, and to pitch upon a discreet person to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life. I come now to the

III. Thing I propounded, which is, *To Answer the main objection of our Adversaries against this Principle*; and likewise to shew that there is no such Reason and Necessity for an universal infallible Judge, as they pretend. Now their great Objection is this, if every man may judge for himself, there will be nothing but confusion in Religion, there will be no end of Controversies: so that an universal infallible Judge is necessary, and without this God had not made sufficient provision for the assurance of mens Faith, and for the Peace and Unity of his Church: Or, as it is expressed in the *Canon Law*, *aliter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus; otherwise our Lord had not seem'd to be discreet*. How plausible soever this Objection may appear, I do not despair but if men will lay aside prejudice, and impartially consider things, to make it abundantly evident, that this ground is not sufficient to found an Infallible Judge upon. And therefore in answer to it, I desire these following particulars may be considered.

First, That this which they say, rather proves what God should have done according to their fancy, than what he hath really and actually done. My *Text* expressly bids Christians to *try the Spirits*, which to any man's sense does imply, that they may judge of these matters: But the Church of *Rome* says they may not; because if this liberty were permitted, God had not ordered things wisely, and for the best, for the peace and unity of his Church. But, as the *Apostle* says in another case, *What art thou, O man, that objectest against God*?

Secondly, If this Reasoning be good, we may as well conclude that there is an universal infallible Judge set over the whole World in all *Temporal* matters, to whose Authority all mankind is bound to submit. Because this is as necessary to the peace of the World, as the other is to the peace of the Church.

Church. And men surely are every whit as apt to be obstinate and perverse about matters of Temporal Right, as about matters of Faith. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no such universal Judge appointed by God over the whole world, to decide all Cases of temporal Right; and for want of him the world is fain to shift as well as it can. But now a very acute and scholastical man that would argue that God must needs have done whatever he fancies convenient for the World should be done, might by the very same way of Reasoning conclude the necessity of an universal infallible Judge in Civil matters as well as in matters of Religion: And their *aliter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus*; otherwise God had not seem'd to be discreet, is every whit as cogent and as civil, in the one Case as the other.

Thirdly, There is no need of such a Judge, to assure men in matters of Religion; Because men may be sufficiently certain without him. I hope it may be certain and clear enough *That there is a God*; and *That his Providence governs the World*: and *That there is another life after this*, though neither Pope nor Council had ever declared any thing about these matters. And for Revealed Doctrines, we may be certain enough of all that is necessary, if it be true which the *Fathers* tell us, *That all things necessary are plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures*.

Fourthly, An infallible Judge, if there were one, is no certain way to end Controversies, and to preserve the unity of the Church; unless it were likewise infallibly certain, *That there is such a Judge, and Who he is*. For till men were sure of both these, there would still be a Controversy whether there be an infallible Judge, and who he is. And if it be true which they tell us, *That without an infallible Judge Controversies cannot be ended*, then a Controversy concerning an infallible Judge can never be ended. And there are two Controversies actually on foot about an infallible Judge; One, *Whether there be an infallible Judge or not*: which is a Controversy between Us and the Church of Rome: and the other, *Who this infallible Judge is*: which is a Controversy among themselves, which could never yet be decided: And yet till it be decided, Infallibility, if they had it, would be of no use to them for the ending of Controversies.

Fifthly, There is no such absolute need, as is pretended, of determining all Controversies in Religion. If men would divest themselves of prejudice and interest, as they ought in matters of Religion, the necessary things of Religion are plain enough, and men would generally agree well enough about them: But if men will suffer themselves to be byassed by these, they would not hearken to an infallible Judge, if there were one; or they would find out some way or other to call his Infallibility into question. And as for doubtful and lesser matters in Religion, Charity and Mutual Forbearance among Christians would make the Church as peaceable and happy as perhaps it was ever design'd to be in this World, without absolute unity in Opinion.

Sixthly and Lastly, Whatever may be the inconveniences of mens judging for themselves in Religion, yet taking this Principle with the Cautions I have given, I doubt not to make it appear, that the inconveniences are far the least on that side. The present condition of humane Nature doth not admit of any constitution of things, whether in Religion or Civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience: That is the best state of things which is liable to the least and fewest. If men be modest, and humble, and willing to learn, God has done that which is sufficient for the assurance of our Faith, and for the peace of his Church, without an infallible Judge: and if men will not be so, I cannot tell what would

would be sufficient. I am sure there were Heresies and Schisms in the *Apostles* Times, when those who governed the Church were certainly guided by an infallible Spirit. God hath appointed Guides and Teachers for us in matters of Religion, and if we will be contented to be instructed by them in those necessary Articles and Duties of Religion, which are plainly contained in Scripture; and to be counselled and directed by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not see why we might not do well enough without any infallible Judge or Guide.

But still it will be said, Who shall judge what things are plain and what doubtful? The answer to this, in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in Religion, every man that hath been duly instructed in the Principles of Religion can judge of it, or else it is not plain. But there are some things in Religion so very plain, that no Guide or Judge can in reason claim that authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary; no, tho he pretend to Infallibility; no, tho he were an *Apostle*, tho he were an *Angel from Heaven*. St. Paul puts the case so high, Gal. 1. 8. *Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what you have received, let him be accursed*: which plainly supposeth that Christians may and can judge when Doctrines are contrary to the Gospel. What? not believe an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel from heaven*, if he should teach any thing evidently contrary to the plain Doctrine of the Gospel? If he should determine Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue? No; nor an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel*; because such a Doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in Religion. And yet *Bellarmin* puts this very Case, and says, if the Pope should so determine, *we were bound to believe him, unless we would sin against Conscience*.

I will conclude this Discourse by putting a very plain and familiar Case; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a Guide, and what not. Suppose I came a Stranger into *England*, and landing at *Dover* took a Guide there to conduct me in my way to *Tork*, which I knew before by the *Map* to lie *North* of *Dover*: having committed my self to him, if he lead me for two or three days together out of any plain Road, and many times over hedge and ditch, I cannot but think it strange, that in a civil and well-inhabited Country there should be no Highways from one part of it to another: Yet thus far I submit to him, tho not without some regret and impatience. But then if after this, for two or three days more he lead me directly *South*, and with my face full upon the Sun at noon-day, and at last bring me back again to *Dover* *Pere*; and still bids me follow him: Then certainly no Modesty does oblige a man not to dispute with his Guide, and to tell him surely that can be no way, because it is *Sea*. Now tho he set never so bold a face upon the matter, and tell me with all the gravity and authority in the world, That it is not *the Sea* but *dry Land* under the *species* and *appearance* of *Water*; and that whatever my eyes tell me, having once committed my self to his guidance, I must not trust my own senses in the case; it being one of the most dangerous sorts of Infidelity for a man to believe his own eyes rather than his *faithful* and *infallible Guide*: All this moves me not; But I begin to expostulate roundly with him, and to let him understand that if I must not believe what I see, he is like to be of no farther use to me; because I shall not be able, at this rate, to know whether I have a Guide, and whether I follow him or not. In short, I tell him plainly, that when I took him for my Guide, I did not take him to tell me the difference between *North* and *South*, between a *Hedge* and a *Highway*, between *Sea* and *dry Land*; all this I knew before, as well as he or any man else

else could tell me; but I took him to conduct and direct me the nearest way to *Tork*. And therefore after all his impertinent talk, after all his Motives of Credibility to persuade me to believe him, and all his confident *Sayings*, which he gravely calls *Demonstrations*, I stand stiffly upon the shore, and leave my learned and reverend Guide to take his own course, and to dispose of himself as he pleaseth; but firmly resolv'd not to follow him. And is any man to be blamed that breaks with his Guide upon these Terms?

And this is truly the Case, when a man commits himself to the Guidance of any Person or Church: If by vertue of this Authority they will needs persuade me out of my senses, and not to believe *what I see*, but *what they say*; that *Virtue is Vice*, and *Vice Virtue*, if they declare them to be so: And that because they say they are infallible, I am to receive all their Dictates for Oracles, tho' never so evidently false and absurd in the Judgment of all Mankind: In this case there is no way to be rid of these unreasonable People, but to desire of them, since one kindness deserves another, and all Contradictions are alike easie to be believed, that *they* would be pleased to believe that Infidelity is Faith, and that when I absolutely renounce their Authority, I do yield a most perfect submission and obedience to it.

Upon the whole matter, all the Revelations of God, as well as the Laws of men, go upon this presumption, that men are not stark Fools; but that they will consider their Interest and have some regard to the great concernment of their eternal Salvation. And this is as much to secure men from mistake in matters of Belief, as God hath afforded to keep men from sin in matters of Practice. He hath made no effectual and infallible provision that men shall not sin; and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good Reason, why God should take more care to secure men against Errors in belief, than against sin and wickedness in their Lives.

I shall now only draw *three or four* Inferences from this Discourse which I have made, and so conclude.

1. *That it is every man's Duty, who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to understand the grounds of his Religion.* For to try Doctrines, is to enquire into the grounds and reasons of them; which the better any man understands, the more firmly he will be established in the Truth, and be the more resolute in the day of Trial, and the better able to withstand the arts and assaults of cunning Adversaries, and the fierce storms of Persecution. And on the contrary, that man will soon be moved from his steadfastness, who never examined the Grounds and Reasons of his belief. When it comes to the Trial, he that hath but little to say for his Religion will probably neither do nor suffer much for it.

2. *That all Doctrines are vehemently to be suspected which decline Trial*, and are so loth to be brought into the light; which will not endure a fair Examination, but magisterially require an implicit Faith: Whereas Truth is bold and full of courage, and loves to appear openly; and is so secure and confident of her own strength as to offer her self to the severest Trial and Examination. But to deny all liberty of Enquiry and Judgment in matters of Religion, is the greatest injury and disparagement to Truth that can be, and a tacit acknowledgment that she lies under some disadvantage, and that there is less to be said for her than for Error.

I have often wonder'd why the People in the Church of *Rome* do not suspect their Teachers and Guides to have some ill design upon them, when they do so industriously debar them of the means of Knowledge, and are so very loth to let them understand what it is that we have to say against their Religion. For can any thing in the world be more suspicious, than to

persuade men, to put out their eyes, upon promise that they will help them to a much better and more faithful Guide? If any Church, any profession of men, be unwilling their Doctrines should be exposed to Trial, it is a certain sign they know something by them that is faulty; and which will not endure the light. This is the account which our Saviour gives us in a like case; It was *because mens deeds were evil that they loved darkness rather than light. For every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd: But he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.*

3. Since Reason and Christianity allow this liberty to private persons to judge for themselves in matters of Religion, we should use this privilege with much modesty and humility, with great submission and deference to our Spiritual Rulers and Guides, whom God hath appointed in his Church. And there is very great need of this Caution, since by experience we find this liberty so much abused by many to the nourishing of Pride and Self-conceit, of Division and Faction; and those who are least able to judge, to be frequently the most forward and confident, the most peremptory and perverse: and instead of demeaning themselves with the submission of Learners, to assume to themselves the authority of Judges, even in the most doubtful and disputable matters.

The Tyranny of the *Roman Church* over the Minds and Consciences of men, is not to be justified upon any account; but nothing puts so plausible a colour upon it, as the ill use that is too frequently made of this natural Privilege of mens judging for themselves in a matter of so infinite concernment, as that of their eternal happiness. But then it is to be considered, that the proper remedy in this case, is not to deprive men of this privilege, but to use the best means to prevent the abuse of it. For though the *inconveniences* arising from the ill use of it may be very great, yet the *mischief* on the other hand is intolerable. Religion it self is liable to be abused to very bad purposes, and frequently is so; but it is not therefore best that there should be no Religion: And yet this Objection, if it be of any force and pursued home, is every whit as strong against Religion it self, as against mens liberty of judging in matters of Religion. Nay I add farther, that no man can judiciously embrace the true Religion, unless he be permitted to judge whether that which he embraces be the true Religion or not.

4. When upon due Trial and Examination we are well settled and establish'd in our Religion, *let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering; and not be like Children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, through the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.* And above all, let us resolve to live according to the excellent Rules and Precepts of our holy Religion; let us heartily obey that Doctrine which we profess to believe. We, who enjoy the *Protestant Religion*, have all the means and advantages of understanding the Will of God, free liberty and full scope of enquiring into it; and informing our selves concerning it: We have all the opportunities we can wish of coming to the knowledge of our Duty: The Oracles of God lie open to us, and his Law is continually before our eyes; *his word is nigh unto us in our mouths and in our hearts;* (that is, we may read it and meditate upon it) *that we may do it: The Key of Knowledge is put into our hands, so that if we do not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, it is we our selves that shut our selves out.* And where there is nothing to hinder us from the knowledge of our Duty, there certainly nothing can excuse us from the practice of it. For the end of all knowledge is to direct men in their duty, and effectually to engage them

to the performance of it: The great business of Religion is, *to make men truly good, and to teach them to live well.* And, if Religion have not this effect, it matters not of what Church any man lists and enters himself; for most certainly, *A bad man can be saved in none.* Tho' a man know the right way to Heaven never so well, and be entred into it, yet if he will not walk therein, he shall never come thither: Nay, it will be an aggravation of this man's unhappiness, that he was lost in the way to Heaven, and perill'd in the very road to Salvation. But if we will in good earnest apply our selves to the Practice of Religion, and the obedience of God's Holy Laws, his Grace will never be wanting to us to so good a purpose.

I have not time to recommend Religion to you at large, with all its advantages. I will comprise what I have to say in a few words, and mind them at your peril. Let that which is our great concernment be our great care, *To know the truth and to do it, To fear God and keep his Commandments.* Considering the Reasonableness and the Reward of Piety and Virtue, nothing can be wiser; considering the mighty Assistance of God's Grace, which he is ready to afford us, and the unspeakable satisfaction and delight which is to be had in the doing of our duty, nothing can be easier: Nothing will give us that pleasure, while we live; nothing can minister that true and solid comfort to us, when we come to die: There is probably no such way for a man to be happy in this World; to be sure, there is no way but this to escape the intolerable and endless miseries of another World.

Now God grant that we may all know and do in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, for his Mercies sake in Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for ever.
Amen.

FERMON

ASSISTANT

WIGSTON upon THAMES

July 21 1881

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

KINGSTON upon THAMES,

July 21. 1681.

TO

TO THE

Right Worshipful, and my Honoured Friend,

Joseph Reeve, Esq;

High Sheriff of the

County of SURREY.

S I R,

WHen I had perform'd the Service which you were pleased to call me to in the Preaching of this Sermon, I had no thoughts of making it more publick; And yet in this also I was the more easily induced to comply with your desire, because of the suitableness of the Argument to the Age in which we live; wherein as Men have run into the wildest extremities in other things, so particularly in the matter of Oaths; some making Conscience of taking any Oaths at all, and too many none at all of breaking them.

To convince the great mistake of the one extreme, and to check the growing evil and mischief of the other, is the chief design of this Discourse. To which I shall be very glad if, by God's Blessing, it may prove any-wise serviceable. I am,

S I R,

Your very faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotson.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XXII.

The Lawfulness and Obligation of Oaths.

H E B. VI. 16.

And an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

TH E Necessity of Religion to the support of humane Society, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, That the obligation of an Oath, which is so necessary for the maintenance of Peace and Justice among men, depends wholly upon the sense and belief of a Deity. For no reason can be imagined why any man that doth not believe a God, should make the least conscience of an Oath, which is nothing else but a solemn appeal to God as a witness of the truth of what we say. So that whoever promotes Atheism and Infidelity; doth the most destructive thing imaginable to human Society, because he takes away the reverence and obligation of Oaths: And whenever that is generally cast off, humane Society must disband, and all things run into disorder. The just sense whereof made *David* cry out to God with so much earnestness, as if the world had been cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in pieces *Psal. 12. Help, Lord, for the righteous man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men:* intimating, That when Faith fails from among men, nothing but a particular and immediate interposition of the Divine Providence can preserve the world from falling into confusion. And our Blessed Saviour gives this as a sign of the end of the world, and the approaching dissolution of all things, when faith and truth shall hardly be found among men, *Luke 18 8. When the Son of man comes, shall he find Faith on the earth?* This state of things doth loudly call for his coming to destroy the world, which is even ready to dissolve and fall in pieces of it self, when these bands and pillars of humane Society do break and fail. And surely never in any age was this sign of the coming of the Son of Man more glaring and terrible than in this degenerate Age wherein we live, when almost all sorts of men seem to have broke loose from all obligations to faith and truth.

And therefore I do not know any Argument more proper and useful to be treated of upon this occasion than of the Nature and Obligation of an Oath, which is the utmost security that one man can give to another of the truth of what he says; the strongest tye of fidelity, the surest ground of judicial proceedings, and the most firm and sacred bond that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the administration of publick Justice; upon Judge, and Jury, and Witnesses.

And for this reason I have pitch'd upon these words: In which the Apostle declares to us the great use and necessity of Oaths among men; *an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* He had said before, that for our greater assurance and comfort God hath confirmed his promises to us
by

by an Oath; condescending herein to deal with us after the manner of men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful matter, confirm what they say by an Oath. And generally when any doubt or controversy ariseth between Parties concerning a matter of fact, one side affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this contest by an Oath; *An Oath for confirmation being to them an end of all strife: An Oath for confirmation, as בעדאמר, for the greater assurance and establishment of a thing:* Not that an Oath is always a certain and infallible decision of things according to truth and right, but that this is the utmost credit that we can give to any thing, and the last resort of truth and confidence among men: After this we can go no farther; for if the Religion of an Oath will not oblige men to speak truth, nothing will. This is the utmost security that men can give, and must therefore be the final decision of all contests; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

Now from this assertion of the Apostle concerning the great use and end of Oaths among men, I shall take occasion,

1. To consider the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it.
 2. To shew the *great use* and even *necessity* of Oaths, in many cases.
 3. To vindicate the *lawfulness* of them where they are necessary.
 4. To shew the *sacred obligation* of an Oath.
- I shall be as brief in these as the just handling of them will bear.

I. For the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it. *An Oath is an invocation of God, or an appeal to him as a witness of the truth of what we say.* So that an Oath is a sacred thing, as being an act of Religion and an invocation of the Name of God: And this, whether the Name of God be expressly mentioned in it or not. If a man only say, *I swear, or I take my Oath,* that a thing is, or is not, so or so; or that I will, or will not, do such a thing: Or if a man *answer upon his Oath,* being abjured and required so to do: Or if a man *swear, by Heaven, or by Earth,* or by any other thing that hath relation to God; in all these cases a man doth virtually call God to witness; and in so doing he doth by consequence invoke him as a Judge and an Avenger, in case what he swears be not true: And if this be expressed, the Oath is a formal Imprecation; but whether it be, or not, a curse upon our selves is always implied in case of Perjury.

There are *two* sorts of Oaths, *Affertory* and *Promissory*. An *assertory* Oath is when a man affirms or denies upon Oath a matter of fact, past, or present: when he swears that a thing was, or is so, or not so. A *promissory* Oath is a promise confirmed by an Oath, which always respects something that is future: And if the promise be made directly and immediately to God, then it is called a *Vow*; if to men, an *Oath*. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to shew the *great use* and even *necessity* of Oaths, in many cases: which is so great, that humane Society can very hardly, if at all, subsist long without them. Government would many times be very insecure, and for the faithful discharge of Offices of great trust, in which the welfare of the publick is nearly concerned, it is not possible to find any security equal to that of an Oath; because the obligation of that reacheth to the most secret and hidden practices of men, and takes hold of them in many cases where the penalty of no humane Law can have any awe or force upon them: and especially, it is (as the *Civil Law* expresseth it) *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the best means of ending controversies.

And

And where mens estates or lives are concerned, no evidence but what is assur'd by an Oath will be thought sufficient to decide the matter, so as to give full and general satisfaction to mankind. For in matters of so great concernment, when men have all the assurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to sit down and rest satisfied with it. And among all Nations an Oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and satisfactory way of deciding such controversies.

III. The *third* thing I propos'd was, to vindicate the *lawfulness* of Oaths, where they are necessary. And it is a very strong inducement to believe the lawfulness of them, that the unavoidable condition of human affairs hath made them so necessary. The Apostle takes it for granted, that an Oath is not only of great use in humane affairs, but in many cases of great necessity, to confirm a doubtful thing, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be decided to the satisfaction of the Parties contending; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* And indeed it is hardly imaginable that God should not have left that lawful, which is so evidently necessary to the peace and security of mankind.

But because there is a *Seet*, sprung up in our memory, which hath called in question the lawfulness of all Oaths, to the great mischief and disturbance of humane Society, I shall endeavour to search this matter to the bottom, and to manifest how unreasonable and groundless this Opinion is. And to this end, I shall

First, Prove the lawfulness of Oaths from the authority of this Text, and from the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it.

Secondly, I shall shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from Reason, or from Scripture, which last they principally rely upon; and if it could be made out from thence, would determine the case.

I. I shall prove the lawfulness of Oaths from the Authority of this Text, and the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it. Because the Apostle doth not only speak of the use of Oaths among men without any manner of censure and reproof, but as a commendable custom and practice, and in many cases necessary for the confirmation of doubtful matters, and in order to the final decision of Controversies and Differences among men. For,

First, He speaks of it as the general practice of Mankind, to confirm things by an Oath, in order to the ending of differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more universally obtained in all Ages and Nations of the world; than which there is not a more certain indication that a thing is agreeable to the Law of Nature and the best Reason of Mankind. And that this was no degenerate practice of Mankind, like that of Idolatry, is from hence evident; that when God separated a People to himself, it was practis'd among them, by the holy Patriarchs, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many Cases commanded by the Law of *Moses*; which, had it been a thing evil in it self, and forbidden by the Law of Nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, Another undeniable Argument from the Text of the lawfulness of Oaths is, that God himself, in condescension to the custom of men who use to confirm and give credit to what they say by an Oath, is represented by the Apostle as confirming his promise to us by an Oath, *Ver. 13. When God made the promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he swears by himself. For men verily swear by the greater; and an Oath for confirma-*

tion is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: which he certainly would not have done, had an Oath been unlawful in it self. For that had been to comply with men in an evil practice, and by his own example to give countenance to it in the highest manner: But though God condescend to represent himself to us after the manner of men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own nature evil and sinful.

Thirdly, From the great Usefulness of Oaths in humane affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our word, and to put an end to Contestations. Now that which serves to such excellent purposes, and is so convenient for humane society, and for mutual security and confidence among men, ought not easily to be presumed unlawful, till it be plainly proved to be so. And if we consider the nature of an Oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the least appearance of evil in it. There is surely no evil in it, as it is an act of Religion; nor as it is an appeal to God as a witness and avenger in case we swear falsely; nor as it is a confirmation of a doubtful matter; nor as it puts an end to strife and controversy. And these are all the essential ingredients of an Oath, and the ends of it; and they are all so good, that they rather commend it, than give the least colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from *Reason* or from *Scripture*.

First, From *Reason*. They say the necessity of an Oath is occasioned by the want of truth and fidelity among men. And that every man ought to demean himself with that faithfulness and integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his word; and then Oaths will be needless. This pretence will be fully answered if we consider these two things.

1. That in matters of great importance no other obligation, besides that of an Oath, hath been thought sufficient amongst the best and wisest of men, to assert their fidelity to one another. *Even the best of men* (to use the words of a great Author) *have not trusted the best men without it*. As we see in very remarkable instances, where Oaths have passed between those who might be thought to have the greatest confidence in one another: As between *Abraham* and his old faithful servant *Eliczer*, concerning the choice of a wife for his Son: Between Father and Son, *Jacob* and *Joseph*, concerning the burial of his Father in the Land of *Canaan*: Between two of the dearest and most intimate Friends, *David* and *Jonathan*, to assure their Friendship to one another; and it had its effect long after *Jonathan's* death, in the saving of *Mephibosheth*, when reason of State and the security of his Throne seem'd to move *David* strongly to the contrary; for it is expressly said 2. Sam. 21. 7. that *David* spared *Mephibosheth*, *Jonathan's* Son, because of the oath of the Lord that was between them; implying, that had it not been for his Oath, other considerations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the rest of *Saul's* Children,

2. This Reason, which is alledged against Oaths among men, is much stronger against God's confirming his promises to us by an Oath. For he, who is Truth it self, is surely of all other most to be credited upon his bare word, and his oath needless to give confirmation to it; and yet he condescends to add his oath to his word; and therefore that reason is evidently of no force.

Secondly, From *Scripture*. Our Saviour seems altogether to forbid swearing in any case, *Matth. 5. 33, 34. Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thy self: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither*

neither by heaven, &c. But let your Communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. And this Law St. James recites, chap. 5. vers. 12. as that which Christians ought to have a very particular and principal regard to; *above all things, my Brethren, swear not*: And he makes the breach of this Law a damning sin, *lest ye fall into condemnation*. But the Authority of our Saviour alone is sufficient, and therefore I shall only consider that Text.

And, because here lies the main strength of this opinion of the unlawfulness of Oaths, it is very fit that this Text be fully consider'd; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our Saviour's meaning by this prohibition wholly to forbid the use of Oaths.

But before I enter upon this matter, I will readily grant, that there is scarce any Error whatsoever that hath a more plausible colour from Scripture, than this; which makes the case of those who are seduced into it the more pityable: But then it ought to be consider'd, how much this Doctrine of the unlawfulness of Oaths reflects upon the Christian Religion: since it is so evidently prejudicial both to humane Society in general, and particularly to those persons that entertain it: neither of which ought rashly to be supposed and taken for granted, concerning any Law delivered by our Saviour: Because upon these terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the divine wisdom of our Saviour's Doctrine, and the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion. Of the inconvenience of this Doctrine to humane Society, I have spoken already. But besides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them suspected to Government, and in many cases incapable of the common benefits of Justice and other privileges of humane Society, and exposeth them to great Penalties, as the constitution of all Laws and Governments at present is, and it is not easie to imagine how they should be otherwise. And which is very considerable in this matter, it sets those who refuse Oaths upon very unequal terms with the rest of Mankind, if where the estates and lives of men are equally concern'd, their bare testimonies shall be admitted without an Oath, and others shall be obliged to speak upon Oath: Nothing being more certain in experience than that many men will lie for their interest, when they will not be perjured, God having planted in the natural Consciences of men a secret dread of perjury above most other sins. And this inconvenience is so great, as to render those who refuse oaths in all cases almost intolerable to humane Society. I speak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to persuade them to measure truth by their interest: but on the other hand I must needs say, that it is no Argument either of a wise or good man to take up any opinion, especially such a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon slight grounds. And this very consideration that it is so much to their inconvenience, may justly move them to be very careful in the examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this Prohibition of our Saviour; and to this purpose, I desire these *three* things may be well consider'd

First, That several circumstances of these words of our Saviour do manifestly shew, that they ought to be interpreted in a limited sense, as only forbidding swearing in common conversation; *needless* and *heedless* oaths (as one expresleth it) and in general all voluntary swearing, unless upon some great and weighty cause, in which the glory of God and the good of the souls of men is concerned. For that in such cases a voluntary Oath may be lawful, I am induced to believe from the example of St. Paul, who

useth it more than once upon such occasions; of which I shall hereafter give particular Instances.

And this was the sense of wise men among the *Heathen*, that men should not swear but upon necessity and great occasion. Thus *Ensebins*, the Philosopher in *Stobæus*, counsels men. *Some (says he) advise men to be careful to swear the truth; but I advise principally that men do not easily swear at all, that is, not upon any slight but only upon weighty occasions; To the same purpose Epictetus, Shun oaths wholly, if it be possible; if not, however as much as thou canst: And so likewise Simplicius in his Comment upon him, We ought wholly to shun swearing, except upon occasions of great necessity. And Quintilian among the Romans, In totum jurare, nisi ubi necesse est, gravi viro parum convenit; To swear at all, except where it is necessary, does not well suit with a wise man.*

And, that this prohibition of our Saviour's ought to be understood of Oaths in ordinary conversation, appears from the opposition which our Saviour makes, *Swear not at all; but let your communication be yea, yea; That is, in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpose oaths, but say and do.* And this is very much confirmed, in that our Saviour does not under this general Prohibition, instance in such oaths as are expressly by the name of God: The reason whereof is this; The *Jews* thought it unlawful in ordinary communication to swear expressly by the name of God, but lawful to swear by the Creatures, as by *Heaven* and *Earth*, &c. So that our Saviour's meaning is as if he had said, You think you may swear in common conversation, provided you do not swear by the name of God; but I say unto you, let your communication be without oaths of any kind: you shall not so much as swear by *heaven* or by *earth*, because God is virtually invoked in every oath. And unless we suppose this to be our Saviour's meaning, I do not see what good Reason can be given why our Saviour should only forbid them to swear by the Creatures, and not much rather by the Name of God; such oaths being surely of all others most to be avoided, as being the most direct abuse and profanation of the Name of God.

Secondly, It is very considerable to the explaining of this Prohibition, that there are like general expressions in other *Jewish* Authors concerning this very matter, which yet must of necessity be thus limited. *Maimonides*, from the ancient *Rabbies*, gives this Rule, that *it is best not to swear at all.* And *Philo* useth almost the same words. And *Rabbi Jonathan* comes very near our Saviour's expression, when he says, *The just man will not swear at all; not so much as by the common Names of God, nor by his Attributes, nor by his Works, as by Heaven, or the Angels, or by the Law.* Now it is not imaginable, that these learned *Jews* should condemn Oaths in all cases, when the Law of *Moses* did in many cases expressly require them. And therefore they are to be understood of voluntary oaths in ordinary conversation. And that the *Jews* meant this by not swearing at all, seems to be very plain from a passage in *Josephus*, who says that the Sect of the *Essenes* forbade their Disciples to swear at all; and yet he tells us at the same time, that they who were admitted into that Sect took an oath to observe the Laws and Rules of it. So that the y who forbade to swear at all, allowed of Oaths imposed by the Authority of Superiors.

Thirdly, which will peremptorily decide this matter, This Prohibition of our Saviour's cannot be understood to forbid all Oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive Christians, and of the Apostles, and even of our Lord himself. *Origen* and *Tertullian* tell us, that the Christians refused to swear by the Emperor's *Genius*; not because it was an Oath, but because they thought it to be idolatrous: But the same *Tertullian*

tullian says, that the Christians were willing to swear *per salutem Imperatoris*, by the health and safety of the Emperour. *Athanasius* being accused to *Constantius* purged himself by oath, and desired that his Accuser might be put to his Oath *sub attestazione veritatis*, by calling the truth to witness; by which form (says he) we Christians are wont to swear. But, which is more than this, *S. Paul*, upon weighty occasions, does several times in his *Epistles* call God to witness for the truth of what he says; which is the very formality of an Oath, *God is my witness*, *Rom. 1. 9. As God is true, our word was not yea and nay*, *2 Cor. 1. 18. and v. 23. I call God for a record upon my soul. Before God I lye not*, *Gal. 1. 20. God is my record*, *Phil. 1. 8. God is my witness*, *1 Thes. 2. 5.* These are all unquestionable Oaths; which we cannot imagine *St. Paul* would have used, had they been directly contrary to our Saviour's Law. And whereas some defend this upon account of his extraordinary Inspiration, I cannot possibly see how this mends the matter. For certainly it is very inconvenient to say, that they who are to teach the Precepts of Christ to others, did themselves break them by Inspiration.

But I go yet farther, and shall urge an example beyond all exception.

Our Saviour himself (who surely would not be the first example of breaking his own Laws) did not refuse to answer upon Oath, being called thereunto at his Trial. So we find *Matt. 26. 63, The high Priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Christ the Son of God*; that is, he required him to answer this question upon Oath. For among the *Jews*, the form of giving an Oath to witnesses and others, was not by tending a formal Oath to them, as the custom is among us, but by adjuring them, that is, requiring them to answer upon Oath: As is plain from *Levit. 5. 1. If a man hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen or known of such a thing; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. If ye have heard the voice of swearing, that is, if being adjured or demanded to answer upon Oath concerning what he hath seen or heard, he do not utter the truth, he is perjured.* Now to this adjuration of the high Priest our Saviour answered, *Thou hast said*; which words are not an avoiding to answer (as some have thought) but a direct answer, as if he had said, *It is as thou sayest, it is even so, I am the Son of God.* For upon this answer the high Priest said, *He hath spoken blasphemy.* But to put the matter beyond all doubt, *St. Mark* tells us, *Mark 14. 61. that he being asked by the high Priest, Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed? He answered, I am.* So that unless we will interpret our Saviour's Doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot understand him to forbid all Oaths, and consequently they are not unlawful.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear satisfaction in this matter to those that are willing to receive it.

As for the Ceremonies in use among us in the taking of Oaths, it is no just Exception against them, that they are not found in Scripture. For this was always matter of Liberty; and several Nations have used several Rites and Ceremonies in their Oaths. It was the custom of the *Grecians*, to swear laying their hands upon the Altar, *quod sanctissimum jusjurandum est habitum*, (saith *A. Gellius*) which was looked upon as the most sacred form of swearing. The *Romans* were wont *Jovem Lapidem jurare*; that is, he that swore by *Jupiter* held a Flint-stone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with these words, *Si sciens fallo, ita me Jupiter bonis omnibus ejiciat, ut ego hunc Lapidem: If I knowingly falsify, God so throw me out of all my possessions as I do this Stone.*

In Scripture there are two Ceremonies mentioned of Swearing: One, of putting the hand under the Thigh of him to whom the Oath was made. Thus *Eliezer*

Eliezer swore to Abraham, Gen. 24. and Joseph to Jacob, Gen. 47. The other was by lifting up the hand to heaven : Thus Abraham expresseth the manner of an Oath, Gen. 14. 22. *I have lift up my hand to the most high God.* And thus God condescending to the manner of men expresseth himself, Deut. 32. 40. *If I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear.* In allusion to this Custom the Psalmist describes the Perjured person, Psal. 144. 8. *Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* And there is not the least intimation in Scripture that either of these Ceremonies were prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by men. And thus among us the Ceremony of Swearing is by laying the hand on the holy Gospel, and kissing the Book; which is both very solemn and significant. And this is the reason why this solemn kind of Oath is called a corporal Oath, and was anciently so called; because the sign or ceremony of it is performed by some part of the Body. And this Solemnity is an aggravation of the Perjury, because it makes it both more deliberate, and more scandalous.

I shall speak but briefly to the

IV. And last particular, viz. the sacred obligation of an Oath : because it is a solemn appeal to God as a witness of the truth of what we say : To God, I say, from whose piercing and all-seeing eye, from whose perfect and infinite knowledge, nothing is or can be hid ; So that there is not a thought in our heart but he sees it, nor a word in our tongue but he discerns the truth or falsehood of it. Whenever we swear, we appeal to his knowledge, and refer our selves to his just judgment who is the powerful Patron and Protector of Right, and the Almighty Judge and Avenger of all falsehood and unrighteousness. So that it is not possible for men to lay a more sacred and solemn obligation upon their Consciences, than by the Religion of an Oath. Moses very well expresseth it, by binding our souls with a bond, Numb. 30. 2. *If a man swear an oath, to bind his soul with a bond ;* intimating that he that swears lays the strongest obligation upon himself, and puts his Soul in pawn for the truth of what he says. And this obligation no man can violate, but at the utmost peril of the judgment and vengeance of God. For every Oath implies a Curse upon our selves in case of Perjury, as Plutarch observes. And this was always the sense of Mankind concerning the obligation of Oaths. *Nullum vinculum ad astringendam fidem majores nostri jurejurando arctius esse voluerunt*, saith Tully : *Our forefathers had no stricter bond whereby to oblige the faith of men to one another, than that of an Oath.* To the same purpose is that in the Comedian, *Aliud si scirem, qui firmare meam apud vos possem fidem, sanctius quam jusjurandum, id pollicerer tibi.* *If I knew any thing more sacred than an Oath, whereby to confirm to you the truth of what I say, I would make use of it.*

I will crave your patience a little longer, whilst by way of inference from this Discourse, I represent to you the great Sin of Swearing in common conversation, upon trivial and needless occasions, and the hainousness of the sin of Perjury.

I First, The great sin of Swearing, upon trivial and needless occasions, in common conversation. Because an Oath is a solemn thing, and reserved for great occasions, to give confirmation to our word in some weighty matter, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be peremptorily and satisfactorily decided. And therefore to use Oaths upon light occasions argues great profaneness and irreverence of Almighty God. So Ulpian the great Roman Lawyer observes, *Nonnullos esse faciles ad jurandum contemptu Religionis : that mens proneness to swearing comes from a contempt of Religion ;* than which nothing disposeth men more to Atheism and Infidelity

lity. Besides that it doth many times surprize men unawares into Perjury : And how can it be otherwise, when men use to interlard all their careless talk with Oaths, but that they must often be Perjur'd? And which is worse, it prepares men for deliberate Perjury ; For with those who are accustomed to swear upon light occasions, an Oath will go off with them more roundly about weightier matters. *From a common custom of Swearing (saith Hierocles) men easily slide into perjury : Therefore (says he) if thou wouldst not be perjured, do not use to swear.* And this perhaps is the meaning of St. James, when he cautions Christians so vehemently against common swearing, *ἵνα μὴ εἰς ψευδορκίαν ᾤκητε*, (for so some of the best ancient Copies read it) *lest ye fall into hypocrisie*, that is, lest ye lie and be perjured, by using your selves to rash and inconsiderate swearing.

And men expose themselves to this danger to no purpose ; Oaths in common discourse being so far from confirming a man's word, that with wise men they much weaken it : For common swearing (if it have any serious meaning at all) argues in a man a perpetual distrust of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. And it is so far from adorning and filling a man's discourse, that it makes it look swoln and bloated, and more bold and blustering, than becomes persons of gentle and good breeding. Besides that it is a great incivility, because it highly offends and grates upon all sober and considerate persons ; who cannot be presumed with any manner of ease and patience to hear God affronted, and his great and glorious Name so irreverently tost upon every slight occasion.

And it is no excuse to men that many times they do it ignorantly, and not observing and knowing what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation of a fault, that a man hath got the habit of it so perfect, that he commits it when he does not think of it. Which consideration should make men oppose the beginnings of this vice, lest it grow into a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, nisi qui expertus est, quam sit difficile consuetudinem jurandi extinguere*, saith St. Austin ; *No man knows, but he that hath tried, how hard it is to get rid of this custom of Swearing* : But yet it is certain men may do it, by resolution and great care of themselves : For he that can chuse whether he will speak or not, can chuse whether he will swear or not when he speaks. *Major consuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat ; The more inveterate a custom is, the greater care should be used to break our selves of it.*

In short, This practice is so contrary to so plain a Precept of our Saviour, and by the breach whereof we incur so great a danger (as St. James assures us) that it must be a great charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common custom of swearing with a serious belief of the *Christian Religion* : Which I would to God those who are concerned would seriously lay to heart ; especially, since this Sin, of all others, hath the least of Temptation to it. Profit or Pleasure there is none in it, nor any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For tho some men pour out Oaths so freely, as if they came naturally from them, yet surely no man is born of a swearing constitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is Custom and Fashion : But to shew that this is no Excuse, it is very observable that it is particularly in the matter of Oaths and Perjury that the Holy Ghost gives that caution, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

And lastly, it deserves to be considered, that this sin is so much the greater because of the frequent returns of it in those that are accustomed to it. So that although it were but small in it self (as it is not) yet the frequent practice of this sin would quickly mount it up to a great score.

2. Secondly,

2. Secondly, To represent the hainousness of the sin of *Perjury*. But before I aggravate this Crime, it is fit to let men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1. When a man asserts upon Oath what he knows to be otherwise: Or promiseth what he does not intend to perform. In both these cases the very act of swearing is *Perjury*. And so likewise when a man promiseth upon oath to do that which it is unlawful for him to do, because this Oath is contrary to a former obligation.

2^{dly}. When a man is uncertain whether what he swear to, be true, This likewise is *Perjury*, in the act; though not of the same degree of guilt with the former, because it is not so fully and directly against his knowledge and conscience. For men ought to be certain of the truth of what they assert upon Oath, and not to swear at a venture. And therefore no man ought positively to swear to the truth of any thing, but what he himself hath seen or heard: This being the highest assurance men are capable of in this World. In like manner, he is guilty of *Perjury* in the same degree, who promiseth upon Oath what he is not morally and reasonably certain he shall be able to perform.

3^{dly}. They are likewise guilty of *Perjury*, who do not use great plainness and simplicity in Oaths; but answer *equivocally* and doubtfully, or with reservation of something in their minds, thinking thereby to save the truth of what they say. And we all know who they are that make use of these arts, and maintain them to be lawful; to the infinite scandal of the Christian Religion and prejudice of humane Society, by doing what in them lies to destroy all Faith and mutual confidence among men. For what can be a greater affront to God, than to use his Name to deceive men? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and use of Oaths, which are for *confirmation*, and to *put an end to strife*? Whereas by these arts the thing is left in the same uncertainty it was before, and there is no decision of it. For there is hardly any form of words can be devised so plain, as not to be liable to *Equivocation*: To be sure a man when he swears may always reserve something in his mind which will quite alter the sense of whatever he can say or promise upon Oath. And this may be laid down for a certain Rule, That all departure from the simplicity of an Oath is a degree of *Perjury*, and a man is never a whit the less forsworn, because his *Perjury* is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary. And though men think by this device to save themselves harmless from the guilt of so great a sin, they do really increase it, by adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mocking God and deceiving themselves.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of *mental reservation*, that the whole Proposition, as made up of what is exprest in words, and of that which is reserved in the mind, is true; For instance, if a man being asked upon Oath whether he be a Priest, shall answer he is not, reserving in his mind that he is not a Priest of *Bacchus*, or some such thing, the whole Proposition is true, and then they say a man may swear to that which is true, without danger of *Perjury*: This is of no force, because, though the whole Proposition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that sincerity which ought to be in an oath: And the end of an Oath is hereby likewise defeated, which is to ascertain the truth of what we say: But if a man reserve something in his mind which alters the truth of what he says, the thing is still as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. Besides, if this be a good reason, a man may swear with reservation in all cases; because the reason equally extends to all cases; for if the truth of the Proposition, as made up

up of what is express'd in words and reserv'd in the mind, will excuse a man from Perjury, then no man can be perjur'd that swears with reservation: But this the *Casuits* of the *Roman Church* do not allow, but only in some particular cases, as *before an incompetent Judge*, or the like; for they see well enough that if this were allow'd in all cases, it would destroy all Faith among men. And therefore since the reason extends alike to all cases, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly. He is guilty of Perjury after the act, who having a real intention when he swears, to perform what he promiseth, yet afterwards neglects to do it: Not for want of Power (for so long as that continues the obligation ceaseth) but for want of Will, and due regard to his Oath

Now that Perjury is a most heinous Sin, is evident, because it is contrary to so plain and great a Law of God; one of the ten *Words or Precepts* of the Moral Law, *thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*; thou shalt not bring or apply the name of God to a falsehood: Or, as *Josephus* renders it, *Thou shalt not adjure God to a false thing*: Which our Saviour renders yet more plainly, *Matt. 5. 33. Thou shalt not forswear thy self*. For he seems to refer to the 3d Commandment when he says, *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thy self*, as he had done before to the 6th and 7th, when he says, *It was said to them of old time, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery*. So that the primary, if not the sole intention of this Law, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, is to forbid the great sin of Perjury. And I do not remember that in Scripture the phrase of *taking God's name in vain*, is used in any other sense. And thus it is certainly used, *Prov. 30. 9. Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*, i.e. lest Poverty should tempt me to steal, and stealth should engage me in Perjury. For among the *Jews* an Oath was tendered to him that was suspected of theft, as appears from *Levit. 6. 2.* where it is said, *If any one be guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, or sweareth falsely; he shall restore all that about which he hath sworn falsely. Lest I steal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*; that is, be perjured, being examined upon Oath, concerning a thing stoln. And for this reason the thief and the perjured person are put together, *Zech. 5. 4.* where it is said, *that a curse shall enter into the House of the thief, and of him that sweareth falsely by the name of God*. From all which it is very probable, that the whole intention of the 3d Commandment is to forbid this great sin of Perjury. To deter men from which, a severe threatening is there added *for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*: that is, he will most severely punish such a one. And 'tis very observable, that there is no threatening added to any other Commandment, but to *this* and the *second*; intimating to us that next to Idolatry and the worship of a false God, Perjury is one of the greatest affronts that can be offered to the divine Majesty. This is one of those sins that cry so loud to Heaven, and quicken the pace of God's judgments, *Mal. 3. 9. I will come near to you in judgement, and be a swift witness against the swearer*: For this God threatens utter destruction to the man and his house, *Zech. 5. 4.* speaking of the curse that goeth over the face of the whole earth: God (says he) will bring it forth, and it shall enter into the House of him that sweareth falsely by the name of God, and shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. It shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it. This sin by the secret judgment of God undermines Estates and Families to the utter ruin of them. And among the *Heathen* it was always reckoned one of the greatest of Crimes, and which

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they did believe God did not only punish upon the guilty person himself, but upon his Family and Posterity; and many times upon whole Nations, as the *Prophet* also tells us, that *because of Oaths the Land mourns*.

I need not use many words to aggravate this sin; it is certainly a Crime of the highest nature. Deliberate Perjury being directly against a man's knowledge, so that no man can commit it without staring his Conscience in the face; which is one of the greatest aggravations of any Crime. And it is equally a sin against *both Tables*; being the highest affront to God, and of most injurious consequence to Men. It is an horrible abuse of the name of God, an open contempt of his Judgement, and an insolent defiance of his Vengeance: And in respect of Men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular person who suffers by it, but Treason against humane Society; subverting at once the foundations of publick Peace and Justice, and the private security of every man's life and fortune. It is a defeating of the best and last way that the wisdom of men could devise for the decision of doubtful matters. *Solomon* very fully and elegantly expresseth the destructive nature of this sin, *Prov. 25. 18. A false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow*: intimating, that amongst all the instruments of ruin and mischief that have been devised by mankind, none is of more pernicious consequence to humane Society than Perjury, and breach of Faith. It is a *pestilence that usually walketh in darkness*, and a secret stab and blow against which many times there is no possibility of defence.

And therefore it highly concerns those who upon these and the like occasions are called upon their Oath, whether as *Jurors* or *Witnesses*, to set God before their eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts whenever they come to take an Oath. And to govern and discharge their Consciences in this matter by known and approv'd Rules, and by the Resolutions of pious and wise men, and not by the loose Reasonings and Resolutions of *Pamphlets*, sent abroad to serve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded men (whether *Atheists*, or *Papists*, or others) on purpose to debauch the Consciences of men by teaching them to play fast and loose with Oaths. And it is a very sad sign of the decay of Christian Religion among us, to see so many who call themselves Christians, to make so little conscience of so great a sin, as even the Light of Nature would blush and tremble at.

I will conclude all with those excellent *Sayings* of the Son of *Sirach* concerning these two sins (I have been speaking of) prophane Swearing and Perjury, *Eccl. 23. 9. 10, &c. Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thy self to the naming of the holy one. A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence. And if he swear falsely, he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities*. And to represent to us the dreadful nature of this sin of Perjury, *There is (saith he) a word that is cloathed about with death*, meaning a rash and false Oath; *There is a word that is cloathed about with death, God grant it be not found in the heritage of Jacob: for all such things shall be far from the godly; and they will not wallow in these sins*. From which God preserve all good men, and make them careful to preserve themselves; as they value the present peace of their own consciences, and the favour of Almighty God in this world and the other, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ, To whom, &c.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

F U N E R A L

Of the Reverend

Mr. Thomas Gouge,

The 4th of November, 1681.

At Saint Anne's Black-Fryars :

With a brief Account of his Life.

T O T H E
 Right Worshipful the PRESIDENT,
 The TREASURER,
 And the rest of the Worthy Governours of the
 Hospital of Christ-Church in LONDON.

WHen, upon the Request of some of the Relations and Friends of the Reverend Mr. Gouge, deceased, and to speak the truth, in compliance with mine own inclination to do right to the Memory of so good a Man, and to set so great an Example in the view of all Men, I had determined to make this Discourse publick; I knew not where more fitly to address it than to your selves, who are the living Pattern of the same Vertue, and the faithful Dispensers and Managers of one of the best and greatest Charities in the world; especially since he had a particular relation to you, and was pleased for some Years last past, without any other consideration but that of Charity, to employ his constant pains in Catechising the poor Children of your Hospital; wisely considering of how great consequence it was to this City, to have the foundations of Religion well laid in the tender Years of so many Persons as were afterwards to be planted there in several Professions; and from a true humility of mind, being ready to stoop to the meanest Office and Service to do good.

I have heard from an intimate Friend of his, that he would sometimes with great pleasure say, that he had two Livings which he would not exchange for two of the greatest in England, meaning Wales and Christ's Hospital; Contrary to common account he esteemed every advantage of being useful and serviceable to God and Men a rich Benefice, and those his best Patrons and Benefactors, not who did him good, but who gave him the opportunity and means of doing it. To you therefore as his Patrons, this Sermon doth of right belong, and to you I humbly dedicate it; heartily beseeching Almighty God, to raise up many by his Example, that may serve their generation according to the will of God, as he did. I am

Your faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotson.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

Preached at the Funeral of Mr. Thomas Gouge :
With a short Account of his Life.

LUKE XX. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; For all live to him.

THE occasion of these words of our blessed Saviour was an Objection which the *Sadducees* made against the Resurrection, grounded upon a case which had some time happened amongst them, of a Woman that had had seven Brethren successively to her Husbands. Upon which case they put this Question to our Saviour; *Whose wife of the seven shall this woman be at the Resurrection?* That is, if men live in another world, how shall the controversie between these seven Brethren be decided? for they all seem to have an equal claim to this Woman, each of them having had her to wife.

This captious Question was not easie to be answered by the *Pharisees*, who fancied the enjoyments of the next life to be of the same kind with the sensual pleasures of this world, only greater and more durable. From which Tradition of the *Jews* concerning a sensual Paradise, *Mahomet* seems to have taken the pattern of his: as he did likewise many other things from the *Jewish* Traditions. Now upon this supposition, that in the next life there will be marrying and giving in marriage, it was a Question not easily satisfied, *Whose wife of the seven this woman should then be?*

But our Saviour clearly avoids the whole force of it, by shewing the different state of men in this world, and in the other, *The children of this world* (says he) *marry, and are given in marriage, but they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And he does not barely and magisterially assert this Doctrine, but gives a plain and substantial Reason for it; because *they cannot die any more.* After men have lived a while in this world they are taken away by death, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world men shall become immortal and live for ever, and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease: For when men can die no more, there will then be no need of any new supplies of mankind.

Our Saviour having thus cleared himself of this Objection by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an Argument for the Proof of the Resurrection, in the words of my Text; *Now that the dead are raised,*

Moses even shewed at the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. That is, when in one of his Books God is brought in speaking to him out of the Bush. and calling himself by the title of the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. From whence our Saviour infers the Resurrection, because God is not the God of the dead but the living: For all live to him.

My design from these words is, to shew the force and strength of this Argument which our Saviour urgeth for the proof of the Resurrection. In order whereunto I shall,

First, Consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*; and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed.

Secondly, I shall enquire, Whether it be more than an Argument *ad hominem*. And if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist?

And then I shall apply this Doctrine of the Resurrection to the present Occasion.

1. *First*. We will consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. And this will appear, if we carefully consider these four things.

1. What our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument,

2. The extraordinary veneration which the Jews in general had for the Writings of Moses, above any other Books of the Old Testament,

3. The peculiar notion which the Jews had concerning the use of this Phrase or expression of God's being any ones God.

4. The great respect which the Jews had for these three Fathers of their Nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For each of these make our Saviour's Argument more forcible against those with whom he disputed.

First, We will consider what our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument. And that was this, That there is another state after this life, wherein men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only suppose the immortality of the Soul, but forasmuch as the Body is an essential part of Man, doth by consequence infer the resurrection of the Body; because otherwise the man would not be happy or miserable in another world. But I cannot see any sufficient ground to believe that our Saviour intended by this Argument directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the Body, but only by consequence, and as it follows from the admission of a future state wherein men shall be rewarded or punished. For that Reason of our Saviour, that God is not a God of the dead but of the living, if it did directly prove the resurrection of the Body, it would prove that the Bodies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were raised to life again, at or before that time when God spake to Moses and called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: But we do not believe this; and therefore ought not to suppose that it was the intention of our Saviour directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the Body, but only (as I said before) a future state. And that this was all our Saviour intended, will more plainly appear, if we consider what that Error of the Sadducees was which our Saviour here confutes. And Josephus, who very well understood the difference of the Sects among the Jews, and gives a particular account of them, makes not the least mention of any Controversie between the Pharisees and the Sadducees about the resurrection of the Body. All that he says, is this, That the Pharisees hold the Immortality of the Soul, and

and that there are Rewards and Punishments in another world : But the Sadducees denied all this, and that there was any other state after this life. And this is the very same account with that which is given of them in the New Testament, ver. 27. of this Chap. *The Sadducees who deny that there is any resurrection.* The meaning of which is more fully declared, *Acts 23. 8. The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit ; but the Pharisees confess both.* That is, the Sadducees denied that there was any other state of men after this life, and that there was any such thing as an immortal Spirit, either Angels, or the Souls of men surviving their Bodies. And, as Dr. Hammond hath judiciously observed, this is the true importance of the word *ἀνάστασις*, viz. a future or another state ; unless in such Texts where the Context does restrain it to the rising again of the Body, or where some word that denotes the body, as *σῶμα* or *Corp*, is added to it.

Secondly. The force of this Argument against those with whom our Saviour disputed will farther appear, if we consider the great veneration which the Jews in general had for the Writings of Moses above any other Books of the Old Testament ; which they (especially the Sadducees) looked upon only as Explications and Comments upon the Law of Moses : But they esteemed nothing as a necessary Article of Faith which had not some foundation in the Writings of Moses. And this seems to me to be the true Reason why our Saviour chose to confute them out of Moses, rather than any other part of the Old Testament : And not as many learned men have imagined, because the Sadducees did not receive any part of the Old Testament, but only the five Books of Moses : so that it was in vain to argue against them out of any other. This I know hath been a general opinion, grounded I think upon the mistake of a passage in Josephus, who says, the Sadducees only receive the written Law. But if we carefully consider that passage, we shall find that Josephus doth not there oppose the Law to the other Books of the Old Testament, which were also written ; but to Oral Tradition For he says expressly, that the Sadducees only receive the written Law, but the Pharisees, over and besides what was written, receive the Oral which they call Tradition.

I deny not but that in the later Prophets there are more express Texts for the proof of a future state, than any are to be found in the Books of Moses ; as *Daniel 12. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* And indeed it seems very plain that holy men among the Jews, towards the expiration of the Legal dispensation, had still clearer and more express apprehensions concerning a future state than are to be met with in the Writings of Moses, or of any of the Prophets.

The Law given by Moses did suppose the Immortality of the Souls of men, and the expectation of another life after this, as Principles of Religion in some degree naturally known ; but made no new and express Revelation of these things. Nor was there any occasion for it, the Law of Moses being a Political Law, not intended for the Government of Mankind, but of one particular Nation ; and therefore was establish'd, as Political Laws are, upon temporal promises and threatnings ; promising temporal prosperity to the observation of its precepts, and threatening the breach of them with temporal judgments and calamities.

And this I take to be the true reason why arguments fetch'd from another world are so obscurely insisted upon under that Dispensation ; not but that another life after this was always suppos'd, and was undoubtedly the hope and expectation of good men under the Law ; but the clear discovery

very of it was reserv'd for the Times of the *Messias*. And therefore as those Times drew on, and the *Sun of righteousness* was near his rising, the shadows of the night began to be chas'd away, and mens apprehensions of a future state to clear up; so that in the time of the *Maccabees* good men spake with more confidence and assurance of these things.

It is likewise to be consider'd, that the temporal calamities and sufferings with which the *Jews* were almost continually harass'd from the time of their Captivity had very much wean'd good men from the consideration of temporal promises, and awaken'd their minds to the more serious thoughts of another world. It being natural to men when they are destitute of present comfort, to support themselves with the expectation of better things for the future, and as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expresseth it, *Chap. 6. v. 18. To fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is before them*, and to employ their reason to fortifie themselves as well as they can in that persuasion.

And this I doubt not was the true occasion of those clearer and ripper apprehensions of good men concerning a future state, in those times of distress and persecution: it being very agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of the Divine Providence not to leave his People destitute of sufficient support under great trials and sufferings: And nothing but the hopes of a better life could have born up the spirits of men under such cruel tortures. And of this we have a most remarkable Instance in the History of the *seven Brethren* in the *Maccabees*, who being cruelly tortured and put to death by *Antiochus*, do most expressly declare their confident expectation of a resurrection to a better life. To which History the Apostle certainly refers, *Heb. 11. 35.* when he says, *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*: where the word, which we render *were tortured*, is *ἐτυμπνιδισθη*, which is the very word used in the *Maccabees*, to express the particular kind of torture used upon them; besides that being offer'd deliverance they most resolutely refus'd to accept of it, with this express declaration, that they hop'd for a resurrection to a better life.

But to return to my purpose; Notwithstanding there might be more clear and express Texts to this purpose in the ancient Prophets, yet our Saviour knowing how great a regard not only the *Sadduces*, but all the *Jews* had to the Authority of *Moses*, he thought fit to bring his proof of the resurrection out of his Writings, as that which was the most likely to convince them.

Thirdly, If we consider farther the peculiar Notion which the *Jews* had concerning the use of this phrase or expression of *God's being any ones God*. And that was this: That God is no where in Scripture said to be any ones God while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while *Isaac* lived, God is not called the God of *Isaac*, but the fear of *Isaac*. As *Gen. 31. 42. Except the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me*; and *Ver. 53.* when *Laban* made a Covenant with *Jacob*, 'tis said that *Laban* did swear by the God of *Abraham*, and the God of *Nahor*, and the God of their Fathers, but *Jacob* swore by the fear of his Father *Isaac*. I will not warrant this Observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For God doth expressly call himself the God of *Isaac*, while *Isaac* was yet alive, *Genes. 28. 13. I am the Lord God of Abraham thy Father, and the God of Isaac*. It is sufficient to my purpose, that this was a Notion anciently current among the *Jews*. And therefore our Saviour's Argument from this Expression must be so much the stronger against them: For if the souls of Men be extinguish'd by death (as the *Sadduces* believ'd) what did it signify to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, to have God called their God, after they were

were dead? But surely, for God to be any one's God, doth signify some great benefit and advantage; which yet (according to the notion which the *Jews* had of this Phrase) could not respect this life, because, according to *them*, God is not said to be any ones God till after he is dead: But it is thus said of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, after their death, and therefore our Saviour infers very strongly against *them*, that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, were not extinguished by death, but do still live somewhere: for *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. And then he adds by way of further Explication, *for all live to him*. That is, tho' those good men who are departed this life, do not still live to *us*, here in this World, yet *they live to God*, and are with him.

Fourthly, If we consider the great respect which the *Jews* had for those three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. They had an extraordinary opinion of them, and esteemed nothing too great to be thought or said of them. And therefore, we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any man to assume any thing to himself that might seem to set him above *Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob*. With what indignation did they fly upon our Saviour on this account? *Joh. 4. 12. Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* and *chap. 8. ver. 53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham? whom makest thou thy self?* Now they who had so superstitious a veneration for them, would easily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: so that our Saviour doth with great advantage instance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any Promise to the utmost, and allow it to signify as much as the words could possibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the *Text* tells us that this Argument put the *Sadduces* to silence. They durst not attempt a thing so odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to shew the fitness and force of this Argument, to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. I come now, in the

II. *Second* place, to enquire, Whether this be any more than an Argument *ad hominem*; and if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist?

II.

I do not think it necessary to believe that every Argument used by our Saviour, or his Apostles, is absolutely and in it self conclusive of the matter in debate. For an Argument which doth not really prove the thing in question, may yet be a very good Argument *ad hominem*; and in some cases more convincing to him with whom we dispute, than that which is a better Argument in it self. Now it is possible, that our Saviour's intention might not be to bring a conclusive Proof of the Resurrection, but only to confute those who would needs be disputing with him. And to that purpose an Argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themselves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual. But although it be not necessary to believe, that this was more than an Argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be absolutely and in it self conclusive of the thing in question. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if we consider these *four* things.

1. That for God to be *any ones God* doth signify some very extraordinary Blessing and Happiness to those persons of whom this is said.

2. If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of the persons to whom this Promise is made.

3. Their Condition in this world.

4. The general Importance of this Promise abstracting from the persons particularly specified and named in it, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

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First, If we consider that for God to be *any ones God* doth signify some very extraordinary Blessing and Happiness to those persons of whom this is said. It is a big word for God to declare himself to be *any ones God*; and the least we can imagine to be meant by it, is that God will in an extraordinary manner employ his power and wisdom to do him good: that he will concern himself more for the happiness of those whose God he declares himself to be, than for others.

Secondly, If we consider the eminent Faith and Obedience of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. *Abraham* left his Country in obedience to God, not knowing whither he was to go. And which was one of the most unparalleled and strange instances of faith and obedience that can almost be imagined, he was willing to have sacrificed his only Son at the command of God. *Isaac* and *Jacob* were also very good Men, and devout Worshipers of the true God, when almost the whole World was sunk into Idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did design some extraordinary Reward to such faithful Servants of his? especially if we consider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a standing encouragement to all those who in After-ages should follow the faith, and tread in the steps of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

Thirdly, If we consider the condition of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* in this World. The Scripture tells us, that *they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth*; had no fixed and settled habitation, but were forced to wander from one Kingdom and Country to another; that they were exposed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this World; so that there was no such peculiar happiness befell them in this life above the common rate of Men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this Promise, that *God would be their God*. For so far as the Scripture History informs us, and further we cannot know of this matter, *Esau* was as prosperous as *Jacob*; and *Jacob* had a great many more troubles and afflictions in this life than *Esau* had. But surely when God calls himself *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, this signifies that God intended some very peculiar blessing and advantage to them above others: which seeing they did not enjoy in this World, it is very reasonable to believe that one time or other this gracious Declaration and Promise of God was made good to them.

And therefore the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. 11. from this very expression of *God's* being said to be *the God of Abraham* and others, argues that some extraordinary happiness was reserved for them in another World: and that upon this very ground I am now speaking of, namely, because the condition of *Abraham* and some others, was not such in this World as might seem to answer the fulness of this Promise. *All these*, says he, *died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the Earth*. From whence he reasons very strongly, that these good men might reasonably expect something better than any thing that had befallen them in this World. For *they*, says he, *that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a Country*; which at the 16th verse he calls *a better Country, that is a heavenly*. *They that say such things*; that is, they who acknowledge themselves

themselves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth, and yet pretend that God hath promised *to be their God*, declare plainly that they expect some Reward beyond this Life. From all which he concludes, *Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared for them a City*, intimating that if no happiness had remained for these good Men in another World, this Promise of God's *being their God*, would shamefully have fallen short of what it seemed to import, *viz.* some extraordinary Reward and Blessing worthy of God to bestow; something more certain and lasting, than any of the Enjoyments of this World; which since God had abundantly performed to them in the Happiness of another Life, his Promise to them was made good to the full, and he needed not *be ashamed to be called their God*. But if nothing beyond this Life had been reserved for them, that Saying of old *Jacob* towards the conclusion of his Life, *few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal Reflection upon the Truth and Faithfulness of him who had so often called himself the God of *Jacob*.

But now, because to all this it may be said, that this Promise seems to have been made good to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in this World: For was not God the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, when he took such a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold Dangers they were exposed to by such a special and immediate Providence, *suffering no one to do them harm, but rebuking even Kings for their sakes*? Was not he *Abraham's* God, when he blest him so miraculously with a Son in his old age, and with so considerable an Estate to leave to him? Was not that Saying of *Jacob* a great acknowledgment of the gracious Providence of God towards him, *With my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands*? And though it must needs be a very cutting Affliction to him to lose his Son *Joseph*, as he thought he had done, yet that was more than recompenced to him in *Joseph's* strange Advancement in *Egypt*, whereby God put into his hands the opportunity of saving his Father and his whole Family alive. And was not God the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in making them Fathers of so numerous an Off-spring, as afterwards became a *great Nation*: and in giving them a fruitful Land; and bringing them to the quiet possession of it by such a *series* of wonderful Miracles? What need then is there of extending this Promise to another World? doth it not seem abundantly made good in those great Blessings which God bestowed upon them whilst they lived, and afterwards upon their Posterity, in this World? And does not this agree well enough with the first and most obvious sense of these words, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; that is, I am he that was their God while they were alive, and am still the God of their Posterity for their sakes; I say, because the *three* former Considerations are liable to this Objection, which seems wholly to take off the force of this Argument? therefore, for the full clearing of this matter, I will add one Consideration more.

Fourthly then, we will consider the general Importance of this Promise, abstracting from the particular Persons specified and named in it, *viz. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; and that is, that God will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad Men; he will be *so* the God of good Men as he is not of the Wicked: and some time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked Man: so that the general importance of this promise is finally resolved into the Equity and Justice of the Divine Providence.

And unless we suppose another Life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impossible, to reconcile the History of the Old Testament, and the common Appearances of things in this World, with the Justice and Goodness of God's Providence.

It cannot be denied, but that *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and several good Men in the Old Testament, had many signal Testimonies of the divine Favour vouchsafed to them in this World: But we read likewise of several wicked Men that had as large a share of temporal Blessings. It is very true that *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* had great Estates, and were petty Princes: But *Pharaoh* was a mighty Prince in comparison of them; and the Kingdom of *Egypt*, which probably was the first and chief Seat of Idolatry, was at the same time one of the most potent and flourishing Kingdoms in the World: and was blest with a prodigious Plenty, whereby they were furnished with store of Corn, when good *Jacob* and his Family had like to have perished by Famine. 'Tis true, *Joseph* was advanc'd to great Power in *Egypt*, and thereby had the opportunity of saving his Father's house, by settling them and feeding them in *Egypt*: But then it is to be consider'd again, that this cost them very dear, and their coming thither was the occasion of a long and cruel Bondage to *Jacob's* Posterity, so that we see that these good Men had no such Blessings, but what were common with them to many others that were wicked: and the Blessings which God bestowed upon them, had great Abatements by the intermixture of many and sore Afflictions.

It seems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this World towards good men are so contriv'd, that it may sufficiently appear, to those who wisely consider the Works of God, that they are not neglected by him; and yet that these outward Blessings are so promiscuously dispensed, that no Man can certainly be concluded to be a good Man from any Happiness he enjoys in this Life; And the Prosperity of good Men is usually on purpose so shadowed and mixed with Afflictions, as may justly raise their Hopes to the expectation of a more perfect Happiness and better Reward, than any they meet with in this World.

And if so, then the general importance of this Promise, that *God will be the God of good Men*, must necessarily signify something beyond this World: Because in this World there is not that clear difference universally made between good and bad Men which the Justice of the Divine Providence doth require, and which seems to be intended, in the general sense of this Promise. For if this Promise (tho' personally made to *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*) be intended, as the Scripture tells us it was, for a standing Encouragement to good Men in all Ages, then it must contain in it this general Truth, *that God will sometime or other plentifully reward every good Man*; that is, he will do something far better for him, than for any wicked Man: But if there be no Life after this, it is impossible to reconcile this sense of it with the course of God's Providence, and with the History of the Bible.

And to make this out fully, and at once, I will only produce that single instance of *Abel* and *Cain*. *Abel* offer'd to God a more excellent Sacrifice than *Cain*, and he had this testimony that he pleased God; which was in effect to declare, that *God was the God of Abel*, and not of *Cain*; so that by virtue of the general importance of this Promise, it might justly be expected, that *Abel's* condition should have been much better than *Cain's*:

But

But if there be no Happiness after this Life, *Abel's* was evidently much worse. For upon this very account, that *he pleased God better*, he was killed by *Cain*, who had offered to God a slight and contemptuous Offering. And *Cain* lived a long time after, and grew great, and *built Cities*. Now supposing there were no other Life after this, this must have been a most horrible Example to all Ages, from the beginning of the World to the end of it, and have made Men for ever afraid to please God upon such hard terms; when they were sure of no other Reward for so doing, but to be oppress'd and slain by the hands of the Wicked. So that if this were really the case, it would puzzle all the Wit and Reason of Mankind to vindicate the Equity and Justice of the Divine Providence, and to rescue it out of the hands of this terrible Objection.

And thus have I as briefly as I could, endeavour'd to clear to you the force of this Argument used by our Saviour for the proof of the Resurrection. And have the longer insisted upon it, because at first appearance it seems to be but a very obscure and remote Argument: And yet so much the more necessary to be clear'd, because this in all probability was that very *Text* upon which the *Jews* in our Saviour's time grounded their belief of a future state, in opposition to the Error of the *Sadduces*; and which they call'd by way of eminency *the promise made of God unto the Fathers*. As will plainly appear, if we consider what *St. Paul* says to this purpose; when he appeals so often to the *Pharisees* for his agreement with them in this Article of the Resurrection, and likewise in the ground of it from *the promise made of God unto the fathers*. *Acts 24. 14, 15. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead*. From whence it is clear, that they both grounded their hope of the Resurrection upon something written in the law and the prophets: and what that was, he expresseth more particular, *c. 26. v. 6, 7. And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers; unto which promise our twelve Tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come*. By the promise made of God unto the Fathers, he means some Promise made by God to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; for so *St. Luke* more than once, in his History of the *Acts*, explains this Phrase of *the God of their Fathers*, *Acts 3. 13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers*; and *c. 7. v. 32, I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*. Now what was the great and famous promise which God made to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*? was it not this of being *their God*? So that it was this very Promise upon which *St. Paul* tells us, the *Jews* grounded their hope of a future state, because they understood it necessarily to signify some Blessing and Happiness beyond this Life.

And now having, I hope, sufficiently clear'd this matter, I shall make some Improvement of this Doctrine of a future state, and that to these three purposes.

1. To raise our minds above this World, and the Enjoyments of this present Life. Were but men thoroughly convinced of this plain and certain truth, that there is a vast difference between Time and Eternity, between a few Years and everlasting Ages: would we but represent to our selves what Thoughts and Apprehensions dying Persons have of this world;

world; how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a Pageant and a Shadow it looks, as it passeth away from them, methinks none of these things could be a sufficient Temptation to any Man to forget God and his Soul; but notwithstanding all the Delights and Pleasures of Sense, we should be strangely intent upon the Concernments of another world, and almost wholly taken up, with the Thoughts of that vast Eternity which we are ready to launch into. For what is there in this World, this *waste and howling Wilderness*, this rude and barbarous Country which we are but to pass through, which should detain our Affections here, and take off our thoughts from our everlasting Habitation; from that *better* and that *heavenly Country*, where we hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we settle our Affections upon the Enjoyments of this present Life, so as to be extremely pleas'd and transported with them, and to say in our hearts, *It is good for us to be here*; if we be excessively griev'd or discontented for the want or loss of them, and if we look upon our present state in this World any otherwise than as a preparation and passage to a better Life; it is a sign that our Faith and Hope of the Happiness of another Life is but very weak and faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earnest believe what we pretend to do concerning these things. For did we steadfastly believe and were thoroughly persuaded of what our Religion so plainly declares to us concerning the unspeakable and endless Happiness of good Men in another World, our Affections would sit more loose to this World, and our Hopes would raise our Hearts as much above these present and sensible things, *as the heavens are high above the earth*; we should value nothing here below, but as it serves for our present Support and Passage, or may be made a means to secure and encrease our future Felicity.

2. The Consideration of another Life should quicken our Preparation for that blessed state which remains for us in the other World. This Life is a State of probation and trial. This World is God's School, where immortal Spirits cloathed with Flesh are trained and bred up for eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing, and a matter of slight concernment to us, how we live and demean our selves in this World; whether we indulge our selves in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, or *live soberly, and righteously, and godly* in this present world: No, it is a matter of infinite moment, as much as our Souls and all Eternity are worth. Let us not deceive our selves; *for as we sow, so shall we reap: If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap everlasting life. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The righteous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

But the Ungodly are not so: whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious Life, feels strange Throes and Pangs in his Conscience when he comes to be cast upon a sick-bed. *The wicked is like the troubled sea* (saith the Prophet) *when it cannot rest*; full of Trouble and Confusion, especially in a dying hour. It is Death to such a man to look back upon his Life, and a Hell to him to think of Eternity. When his guilty and trembling Soul is ready to leave his Body, and just peeping into the other World, what Horror and Amazement do then seize upon him? what a Rage doth such a Man feel in his Breast, when he seriously considers, that he hath been so great a Fool as for the false and imperfect Pleasure of a few days, to make himself miserable for ever?

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3. Let the consideration of that unspeakable Reward which God hath promised to good Men at the Resurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We serve a great Prince who is able to promote us to honour; a most gracious Master who will not let the least service we do for him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the Apostle makes from this large discourse of the Doctrine of the Resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Nothing will make death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to God. *Sleep, saith Solomon, is sweet to the labouring man:* so after a great diligence and industry in working out our own salvation, and (as it is said of David) *serving our generation according to the will of God,* how pleasant will it be to fall asleep? And as an useful and well-spent Life will make our Death to be sweet, so our Resurrection to be glorious. Whatever acts of piety we do to God, or of charity to men; whatever we lay out upon the poor, and afflicted, and necessitous, will all be considered by God in the day of Recompences, and most plentifully rewarded to us.

And surely no consideration ought to be more prevalent to persuade us to alms-deeds and charity to the poor, than that of a Resurrection to another life. Besides the Promises of this life, which are made to works of charity, and there is not any grace or virtue whatsoever, which hath so many and so great Promises of temporal Blessings made to it in Scripture as this Grace of Charity; I say, besides the Promises of this Life, the great Promise of eternal Life is in Scripture in a more especial manner entail'd upon it. Luke 12. 33. *Give alms, saith our Saviour, provide your selves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; and c. 16. v. 9. make to your selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* And 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, &c. that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life;* the word *δεμέλιον*, which our Translation renders *foundation*, according to the common use of it, seems in this place to have a more peculiar notion, and to signify the *security* that is given by a *Pledge*, or by an *Instrument* or *Obligation of contract* for the performance of *Covenants*. For besides that the Phrase of *laying up in store, or treasuring up a foundation*, seems to be a very odd jumbling of Metaphors; this very word *δεμέλιον* almost necessarily requires this notion as it is used by the same Apostle, in his second Epistle to Timothy, chap. 2. v. 19. where it is said, *the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, &c. a Seal being very improper to strengthen a Foundation; but very fit to confirm a Covenant.* And then surely it ought to be render'd, *the Covenant of God remains firm, having this Seal.* And so likewise in the fore-mentioned Text, the sense will be much more easy and current if we render it thus, *treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good Security or Pledge against the time to come;* I add *Pledge*, because that anciently was the common way of security for things let: besides that the Apostle seems plainly to allude to that passage, Tobit 4. 8, 9. *If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly, &c. for thou layest up a good treasure for thy self against the day of necessity, δεμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ἀποταμίσεις, for thou treasurest up for thy self a good Pledge;* to which this of the Apostle exactly answers, *ἀποδοταμιζοντας ἑαυτοῖς δεμέλιον καλόν, treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good Pledge or Security, &c.* the sense however

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is plain, that the Charity of Alms is one of the best ways of securing our future happiness.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in works of charity, the Scripture tells us, that proportionably to the degrees of our Charity shall be the degrees of our Reward; upon this consideration the *Apostle* exhorts the *Corinthians* to be liberal in their Charity, 2 Cor. 9. 6. *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* So that whatever we lay out in this kind, is to the *greatest advantage*, and upon the *best security*; two considerations which use to be very prevalent with rich Men to lay out their Money.

We certainly do it to the *greatest advantage*; because God will consider the very smallest thing that any of us do in this kind. He that shall give so much as *a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward*; these last words *shall not lose his reward*, are a *paradox*, and signify much more than they seem to speak, *viz.* that he shall have a very great Reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewise upon the *best security*; so *Solomon* assures us, Prov. 19. 17. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given he will pay him again*: and we may be confident of our Security where God is Surety; nay, he tells us that in this case he looks upon himself as Principal, and that whatever we do in ways of mercy and charity to the poor, he takes as done to himself. So our Lord hath told us, *Matth.* 25. 40. and we shall hear the same from him again out of his own mouth, when he shall appear in his Majesty to judge the World, *Then the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

And on the other side, the Scripture no where passeth a more severe Doom upon any sort of persons, than upon those who have no bowels of compassion towards their brethren in distress. That is a fearful Sentence indeed, which the *Apostle* pronounceth upon such persons, *James* 2. 13. *He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy.* And this our Saviour represents to us in a most solemn manner, in that lively description which he makes of the Judgment of the Great Day, *Matth.* 25. 31. &c. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, &c. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.* And if this be, as most certainly it is, a true and proper representation of the Process of that day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, What works of Charity and Mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a Sentence of eternal Happiness or Misery will be pass'd upon us: I was hungry, did ye feed me, or did ye not? I was naked, did ye cloath me, or did ye not? I was sick and in prison, did ye visit me, or did ye not? Not but that all the good or evil of our lives, in what kind soever, shall then be brought to account; But that our Saviour did chuse
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to instance particularly, and only in things of this nature, should methinks make a mighty impression upon us, and be a powerful consideration to oblige us to have a very peculiar regard to Works of Mercy and Charity, and to make sure to *abound in this Grace*; that when we shall appear before the great Judge of the World, we may find that Mercy from Him, which we have shew'd to others, and which we shall all undoubtedly stand in need of *in that Day*.

And among all our acts of Charity, those which are done upon least probability and foresight of their meeting with any recompence in this World, either by way of real requital or of fame and reputation, as they are of all other most acceptable to God, so they will certainly have the most ample reward in another World. So our Lord hath assured us, and accordingly adviseth us, *Luke 14. 12, 13. 14. When thou makest a feast, invite not the rich, because they will recompense thee again: but call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just.* If we be Religious for worldly ends and serve God, and do good to Men, only in contemplation of some Temporal Advantage, we take up with present payment, and cut our selves short of our future reward: of such, saith our Lord, *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward: they are their own security, and have taken care to satisfy themselves, and therefore are to expect nothing from God.* But let us who call our selves Christians do something for God, for which we have no hopes to be recompenced in this World; that we may shew that we trust God, and take his Word, and dare venture upon the security of the next World, and that *recompence* which shall be made *at the resurrection of the just*.

And how great and glorious that shall be, our Saviour tells us immediately before my *Text*, *They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, they can die no more, but they are equal to the Angels, and are the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection.* If then we be Heirs of such glorious hopes, and believe that he who is *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, will also be our God: let us live as it becomes the Candidates of Heaven, and the *Children of the Resurrection*, and such as verily believe another Life after this, and hope one Day to *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.*

And now that I have represented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to Works of Charity, from the consideration of the blessed Reward we shall certainly meet with at the Resurrection of the Just; I shall crave your patience a little longer, whilst I propose to you one of the fairest Examples of this kind which either this, or perhaps any other Age could easily present us withal: I mean our deceased Brother to whom we are now paying our last solemn Respects, the Reverend Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*; the worthy Son of a Reverend and Learned Divine of this City, Dr. *William Gouge*; who was Minister of this Parish of *Black Friars* six and forty years; he dyed in 1653, and still lives in the memory of many here present.

I must confess that I am no friend to Funeral *Panegyrics*, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth and merit in the Party commended to give occasion and foundation for them: In such cases, as Praises are not due to the Dead, so they may be of ill consequence to the Living: not only by bringing those of our Profession that make a practice of it, under the suspicion of officious and mercenary Flattery, but likewise by encouraging Men to hope that they also may be well spoken of, and even Sainted when they

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are dead, though they should have done little or no good in their Life: But yet on the other Hand, to commend those excellent Persons the Vertues of whose lives have been bright and exemplary, is not only a piece of justice due to the Dead, but an Act of great Charity to the Living, setting a Pattern of well-doing before our Eyes, very apt and powerful to incite and encourage us to go and do likewise.

Upon both these Considerations, first to do right to the Memory of so good a Man, and then in hopes that the Example may prove fruitful and have a considerable effect upon others to beget the like goodness and charity in them, I shall endeavour, in as a narrow a compass as may be, to give you the just Character of this truly pious and charitable Man, and by setting his Life in a true light to recommend with all the advantage I can so excellent a Pattern to your imitation.

He was born at *Bow* near *Stratford* in the County of *Middlesex* the 19th day of *September* 1605. He was bred at *Eaton* School, and from thence chosen to *King's* College in *Cambridge*, being about 20 years of Age, in the year 1626. After he had finish'd the course of his Studies, and taken his Degrees, he left the *University* and his *Fellowship*, being presented to the Living of *Colsden* near *Croyden* in *Surrey*, where he continued about two or three years; and from thence was remov'd to *St. Sepulchres* in *London*, in the year 1638. and the year after thinking fit to change his condition match'd into a very worthy and ancient Family, marrying one of the Daughters of *Sir Robert Darcy*.

Being thus settled in this large and populous *Parish*, he did with great solicitude and pains discharge all the parts of a vigilant and faithful Minister, for about the space of 24 years. For besides his constant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very diligent and charitable in visiting the sick, and ministering not only spiritual counsel and comfort to them, but likewise liberal relief to the wants and necessities of those that were poor and destitute of means to help themselves in that condition. He did also every morning throughout the year Catechise in the Church, especially the poorer sort who were generally most ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be instructed by him, he did once a week distribute mony among them, not upon a certain Day, but changing it on purpose as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be constantly present; These were chiefly the more aged Poor, who being past labour had leisure enough to attend upon this Exercise. As for the other sort of Poor who were able to work for their living, he set them at work upon his own charge, buying Flax and Hemp for them to spin, and what they spun he took off their Hands, paying them for their Work, and then got it wrought into Cloth, and sold it as he could, chiefly among his Friends, himself bearing the whole loss. And this was a very wise and well-chosen way of Charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater Charity than if he had given these very Persons freely and for nothing so much as they earned by their Work; because by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby rescued them at once from two of the most dangerous temptations of this World, *Idleness* and *Poverty*; and by degrees reclaim'd them to a vertuous and industrious course of Life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the Charity of others.

And this course so happily devis'd and begun by *Mr. Gouge* in his own *Parish* was I think that which gave the first hint to that worthy and useful Citizen *Mr. Thomas Firmin* of a much larger design, which hath been prosecuted by him for some years with that vigour and good success in this City, that

that many hundreds of poor Children, and others who lived idle before, unprofitable both to themselves and the Publick, are continually maintain'd at Work, and taught to earn their own Livelihood much in the same way: He being, by the generous Assistance and Charity of many worthy and well-disposed Persons of all Ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable Loss and Charge of so vast an Undertaking; and by his own forward Inclination to Charity, and his unwearied Diligence and Activity, extraordinarily fitted to sustain and go through the incredible Pains of it.

But to return to our deceased Friend; concerning whom I must content my self to pass over many things worthy to be remembred of him, and to speak only of those Virtues of his which were more eminent and remarkable.

Of his Piety towards God, which is the necessary Foundation of all other Graces and Virtues, I shall only say this, That it was great and quiet without Stir and Noise, and much more in Substance and Reality, than in Shew and Ostentation; and did not consist in censuring and finding fault with others, but in the due Care and Government of his own Life and Actions, and *exercising himself continually to have a Conscience void of offence toward God and toward Men*; in which he was such a Proficient, that even after a long Acquaintance and familiar Conversation with him, it was not easy to observe any thing that might deserve Blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar Virtues of Conversation, in *Modesty, Humility, Meekness, Chearfulness*, and in *Kindness and Charity towards all Men*.

So great was his *Modesty*, that it never appear'd either by Word or Action that he put any value upon himself. This I have often observ'd in him, that the Charities which were procur'd chiefly by his Application and Industry, when he had occasion to give an account of them, he would rather impute to any one who had but the least hand and part in the obtaining of them, than assume any thing of it to himself. Another Instance of his Modesty was, that when he had quitted his Living of *St. Sepulchre's* upon some Dissatisfaction about the Terms of Conformity, he willingly forbore Preaching, saying there was no need of him here in *London* where there were so many worthy Ministers, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his Life, being better satisfy'd in some things he had doubted of before, He had License from some of the Bishops to preach in *Wales* in his Progress; which he was the more willing to do, because in some places he saw great need of it, and he thought he might do it with greater Advantage among the poor People, who were the more likely to regard his Instructions, being recommended by his great Charity so well known to them, and of which they had so long had the Experience and Benefit. But where there was no such need, he was very well contented to hear others persuade Men to Goodness and to practise it himself.

He was *clothed with Humility*, and had in a most eminent degree that Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which, *St. Peter* says, *is in the sight of God of so great price*: So that there was not the least appearance either of Pride or Passion in any of his Words or Actions. He was not only free from Anger and Bitterness, but from all affected Gravity and Moroseness. His Conversation was affable and pleasant; he had a wonderful Serenity of Mind and Evenness of Temper, visible in his very Countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholy, or sad; and for any thing I could discern, after a long and intimate Acquaintance with him, he was upon all occasions and Accidents perpetually the same; always chearful, and always kind;

of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all Men; allowing others to differ from him, even in Opinions that were very dear to him; and provided Men did but *fear God and work Righteousness*, he lov'd them heartily, how distant soever from him in Judgment about things less necessary; In all which he is very worthy to be a Pattern for Men of all Perswasions whatsoever.

But that Virtue which of all other shone brightest in him, and was his most proper and peculiar Character, was his cheerful and unwearied diligence in acts of pious Charity. In this he left far behind him all that ever I knew, and, as I said before, had a singular sagacity, and prudence in devising the most effectual ways of doing good, and in managing and disposing his Charity to the best purposes, and to the greatest extent; always if it were possible, making it to serve some end of Piety and Religion, as the Instructions of poor Children in the Principles of Religion, and furnishing grown Persons that were ignorant with the *Bible* and other Books; strictly obliging those to whom he gave them to a diligent reading of them, and when he had opportunity exacting of them an account how they had profited by them.

In his occasional Alms to the Poor, in which he was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them was always mingled with good counsel, and as great a tenderness and compassion for their Souls as Bodies: which very often attain'd the good effect it was likely to have, the one making way for the other with so much advantage, and Men being very apt to follow the good advise of those who give them in hand so sensible a Pledge and Testimony of their good will to them.

This kind of Charity must needs be very expensive to him, but he had a plentiful Estate settled upon him, and left him by his Father, and he laid it out as liberally in the most prudent and effectual ways of Charity he could think of, and upon such persons as, all circumstances considered, he judg'd to be the fittest and most proper Objects of it.

For about nine or ten years last past he did, as is well known to many here present, almost wholly apply his Charity to *Wales*, because there he judg'd was most occasion for it: and because this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could spare out of his own Estate, but employ'd his whole time and pains to excite and engage the charity of others for his assistance in it.

And in this he had two excellent Designs. One, to have poor Children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully instructed in the Principles of Religion: The other, to furnish Persons of grown Age, the Poor especially, with the necessary helps and means of knowledge, as the *Bible*, and other Books of Piety and Devotion, in their own Language; to which end he procur'd the *Church Catechism*, the *Practice of Piety*, and that best of Books the *Whole Duty of Man*, besides several other pious and useful *Treatises*, some of them to be translated into the *Welsh* Tongue, and great numbers of all them to be printed, and sent down to the chief Towns in *Wales*, to be sold at easy rates to those that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to those that were not.

And in both these Designs, through the blessing of God upon his unwearied Endeavours, he found very great success. For by the large and bountiful Contributions, which chiefly by his industry and prudent application were obtain'd from charitable Persons of all Ranks and Conditions, from the *Nobility* and *Gentry of Wales* and the neighbouring *Counties*, and several of that Quality in and about *London*; from divers of the Right Reverend
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Bishops, and of the Clergy; and from that perpetual Fountain of Charity the City of *London*, led on and encourag'd by the most bountiful Example of the Right honourable the *Lord Mayor* and the *Court of Aldermen*; to all which he constantly added two thirds of his own Estate, which as I have been credibly inform'd was two hundred Pounds a year; I say by all these together, there were every year *eight hundred*, sometimes *a thousand* poor Children educated as I said before; and by this Example several of the most considerable Towns of *Wales* were excited to bring up at their own Charge the like number of poor Children, in the like manner, and under his Inspection and Care.

He likewise gave very great numbers of the Books above-mentioned both in the *Welsh* and *English* Tongues to the poorer sort, so many as were unable to buy them, and willing to read them. But which was the greatest Work of all, and amounted indeed to a mighty Charge, he procured a new and very fair Impression of the Bible and Liturgy of the Church of *England* in the *Welsh* Tongue (the former Impression being spent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all *London*,) to the number of eight thousand; one thousand whereof were freely given to the Poor, and the rest sent to the principal Cities and Towns in *Wales* to be sold to the Rich at very reasonable and low Rates, *viz.* at *four Shillings* a-piece well bound and clasped; which was much cheaper than any *English* Bible was ever sold that was of so fair a Print and Paper: A Work of that Charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way; and for which this Age, and perhaps the next, will have great cause to thank God on his behalf.

In these good Works he employ'd all his Time and Care and Pains, and his whole Heart was in them; so that he was very little affected with any thing else, and seldom either minded or knew any thing of the strange Occurrences of this troublesome and busy Age, such as I think are hardly to be parallel'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he scarce ever spoke any thing about them. For this was the Business he laid to heart, and knowing it to be so much and so certainly the Will of his Heavenly Father, it was his Meat and Drink to be doing of it: and the good Success he had in it was a continual Feast to him, and gave him a perpetual Serenity both of Mind and Countenance. His great Love and Zeal for this Work made all the Pains and Difficulties of it seem nothing to him: He would rise early and sit up late, and continued the same Diligence and Industry to the last, though he was in the threescore and seventeenth year of his Age. And that he might manage the Distribution of this great Charity with his own Hands, and see the good effect of it with his own Eyes, he always once, but usually twice a year, at his own Charge travelled over a great part of *Wales*, none of the best Countries to travel in: But for the Love of God and Men he endured all that, together with the Extremity of Heat and Cold, (which in their several Seasons are both very great there) not only with Patience but with Pleasure. So that all things considered, there have not, since the Primitive Times of Christianity, been many among the Sons of Men to whom that glorious Character of the Son of God might be better applied, that *he went about doing good*. And *Wales* may as worthily boast of this truly Apostolical Man, as of their famous *St. David*; who was also very probably a good Man, as those Times of Ignorance and Superstition went. But his Goodness is so disguised by their fabulous *Legends* and Stories which give us the account of him, that it is not easy to discover it. Indeed ridiculous Miracles in abundance are reported of him; as, that upon occasion of a great number

number of People resorting from all Parts to hear him preach, for the greater advantage of his being heard, a Mountain all on a sudden rose up miraculously under his Feet, and his Voice was extended to that degree that he might be distinctly heard for two or three Miles round about. Such phantastical Miracles as these make up a great part of his History. And admitting all these to be true (which a wise Man would be loth to do) our departed Friend had that which is much greater, and more excellent than all these, a fervent Charity to God and Men; which is more than to *speak* (as they would make us believe St. David did) *with the Tongue of Men and Angels*, more than to raise or remove Mountains.

And now methinks it is pity so good a Design so happily prosecuted should fall and die with this good Man. And it is now under deliberation, if possible, still to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy and charitable Person pitched upon for that purpose, who is willing to undertake that part which he that is gone performed so well: But this will depend upon the Continuance of the former Charities and the Concurrence of those worthy and well-disposed Persons in *Wales* to contribute their part as formerly; which I persuade my self they will chearfully do. I will add but one thing more concerning our deceas'd Brother, that though he meddled not at all in our present Heats and Differences as a Party, having much better things to mind; yet as a Looker-on he did very sadly lament them, and for several of the last years of his Life he continued in the Communion of our Church, and, as he himself told me, thought himself oblig'd in Conscience so to do.

He died in the 77th year of his Age, *Octob. 29th, 1681*. It so pleased God that his Death was very sudden; and so sudden, that in all probability he himself hardly perceived it when it happened, for he died in his Sleep; so that we may say of him, as it is said of *David*, *after he had served his Generation according to the Will of God*, he fell asleep.

I confess that a sudden Death is generally undesirable, and therefore with reason we pray against it; because so very few are sufficiently prepared for it: But to him, the constant Employment of whose Life was the best Preparation for Death that was possible, no Death could be sudden; nay, it was rather a Favour and Blessing to him, because by how much the more sudden so much the more easy: As if God had designed to begin the Reward of the great Pains of his Life in an easy Death. And indeed it was rather a Translation than a Death; and saving that his Body was left behind, what was said of *Enoch* may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good Man with respect to the suddenness of his Change; *he walked with God, and was not, for God took him*.

And God grant that we who survive may all of us sincerely endeavour to tread in the Steps of his exemplary Piety and Charity; of his Labour of Love, his unwearied Diligence and patient Continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging Commendation which he hath already receiv'd from the Mouth of our Lord, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*.

Now the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you always that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; To whom be Glory for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXIV.

Preached at the Funeral of the Reverend *Benjamin Whichcot*, D. D. May 24th 1683.

2 Cor. V. 6.

Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body we are absent from the Lord.

THese Words contain one of the chief grounds of encouragement which the Christian Religion gives us against the fear of death. For our clearer understanding of them it will be requisite to consider the *Context*, looking back as far as the beginning of the *Chapter*, where the *Apostle* pursues the Argument of the foregoing *Chapter*; which was to comfort and encourage Christians under their afflictions and sufferings from this consideration, that these did but prepare the way for a greater and more glorious Reward; *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And suppose the worst, that these sufferings should extend to death, there is comfort for us likewise in this case, *ver. 1.* of this *Chapter*, *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, &c. If our earthly house of this tabernacle;* he calls our Body an *Earthly House*, and that we may not look upon it as a certain Abode and fixed Habitation, he doth by way of correction of himself add, that it is but a *Tabernacle* or Tent which must shortly be taken down: And when it is, *we shall have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* This is a description of our heavenly Habitation, in opposition to our earthly House or Tabernacle; It is a *Building of God*, not like those Houses or Tabernacles which Men build, and which are liable to decay and dissolution, to be taken down, or to fall down of themselves, for such are those Houses of Clay which we dwell in, *whose foundations are in the dust*, but an Habitation prepared by God himself, a *House not made with Hands*; that which is the immediate Work of God being in Scripture opposed to that which is made with Hands, and effected by humane concurrence, and by natural means: And being the immediate Work of God, as it is excellent, so it is lasting and durable, which no earthly thing is: *eternal in the heavens*, that is eternal and heavenly.

For in this we groan earnestly; that is, while we are in this Body we groan by reason of the pressures and afflictions of it. *Desiring to be clothed upon with our House which is from Heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. Desiring to be clothed upon*; that is, we could wish not to put off these Bodies, not to be strip'd of them by death, but to be of the number of those who at the coming of our Lord without the putting off these Bodies shall be changed and clothed upon with their House which is from Heaven, and

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without dying be invested with those spiritual and glorious and heavenly Bodies which Men shall have at the Resurrection.

This I doubt not is the *Apostle's* meaning in these Words; in which he speaks according to a common Opinion among the Disciples grounded (as *St. John* tells us) upon a mistake of our *Saviour's* Words concerning him, *If I will that he tarry till I come*: upon which *St. John* tells us, that *there went a saying among the Brethren*; that that *Disciple should not die*; that is, that he should live till *Christ's* coming to Judgment, and then be changed; and consequently that *Christ* would come to Judgment before the end of that Age. Suitable to this common Opinion among Christians, the *Apostle* here says, *in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our House which is from Heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked*. It hath puzzled *Interpreters* what to make of this Passage, and well it might; for whatever be meant by being clothed, how can they that are clothed be found naked? but I think it is very clear that our *Translators* have not attained the true Sense of this Passage, *Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, & γυμνοὶ ἀπεδοσόμεθα*, which is most naturally rendred thus, *If so be we shall be found clothed, and not naked*: That is, if the coming of *Christ* shall find us in the Body and not de-vested of it; if at *Christ's* coming to Judgment we shall be found alive and not dead. And then the sense of the whole is very clear and current; we are desirous to be clothed upon with our House from Heaven (that is with our spiritual and immortal Bodies) if so be it shall so happen that at the coming of *Christ* we shall be found alive in these Bodies, and not stripp'd of them before by death. And then it follows, *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened* (that is, with the afflictions and pressures of this Life) *not that we would be unclothed* (that is, not that we desire by death to be de-vested of these Bodies) *but clothed upon* (that is, if God see it good we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting off these Bodies have immortality as it were superinduced) *that so Mortality might be swallowed up of Life*. The plain sense is, that he rather desires (if it may be) to be of the number of those who shall be found alive at the coming of *Christ*, and have this mortal and corruptible Body while they are clothed with it, changed into a spiritual and incorruptible Body, without the Pain and Terrour of dying: of which immediate translation into Heaven without the painful divorce of Soul and Body by Death, *Enoch* and *Elias* were examples in the old Testament.

It follows, *ver. 5. Now he that hath wrought for us the self-same thing is God*: That is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this Glorious change: *who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit*. The spirit is frequently in Scripture called the *Witness* and *Seal*, and *Earnest* of our future Happiness, and blessed Resurrection or Change of these vile and earthly Bodies into spiritual and heavenly Bodies. For as the Resurrection of *Christ* from the dead by the power of the holy Ghost is the great Proof and Evidence of Immortality: so the spirit of him that raised up *Jesus* from the dead dwelling in us, is the Pledge and Earnest of our Resurrection to an Immortal Life.

From all which the *Apostle* concludes in the words of the Text, *Therefore we are always confident*, that is, we are always of good courage against the fear of Death, *knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body we are absent from the Lord*, *ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐσθνόμεντες*, which may better be rendred *whilst we converse or sojourn in the Body*, than *whilst we are at Home*; Because the design of the *Apostle* is to shew that the Body is not our House but our Tabernacle; and that whilst we are in the Body we are not at Home, but Pilgrims and Strangers. And this notion the *Heathens* had of our present Life and Condition in this World. *Ex vita discedo* (saith *Tully*) *tanquam ex hospitio non tanquam*

tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diversorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit. We go out of this Life as it were from an Inn, and not from our Home; Nature having designed it to us as a Place to sojourn but not to dwell in.

We are absent from the Lord; that is, we are detained from the blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God, and kept out of the Possession of that Happiness which makes Heaven.

So that the *Apostle* makes an immediate opposition between our continuance in the Body and our blissful Enjoyment of God; and lays it down for a certain Truth, that whilst we remain in the Body we are detained from our Happiness, and that so soon as ever we leave the Body we shall be admitted into it, *knowing, that whilst we converse in the Body we are absent from the Lord.* And *ver. 8. We are willing rather to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord;* intimating that so soon as we quit these Bodies we shall be admitted to the blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God.

My design from this *Text* is to draw some useful *Corollaries* or *Conclusions* from this Assertion of the *Apostle*, *That whilst we are in these Bodies we are detained from our Happiness; and that so soon as ever we depart out of them we shall be admitted to the Possession and Enjoyment of it.* And they are these

1. This Assertion shews us the vanity and fallshood of that Opinion, or rather Dream, concerning the Sleep of the Soul from the time of Death till the general Resurrection. This is chiefly grounded upon that frequent Metaphor in Scripture by which Death is resembled to Sleep, and those that are dead are said to be fallen asleep. But this Metaphor is no-where in Scripture, that I know of, applied to the Soul but to the Body resting in the Grave in order to its being awakened and raised up at the Resurrection. And thus it is frequently used with express reference to the Body, *Dan. 12. 2. Many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake. Matth. 27. 52. And the Graves were opened, and many Bodies of Saints which slept arose. Acts 13. 36. David after he had served his own Generation by the Will of God fell on sleep, and was laid to his Fathers, and saw Corruption; which surely can no otherwise be understood than of his Body. 1 Cor. 5. 21. Now is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept; that is, the Resurrection of his Body is the earnest and assurance that ours also shall be raised. And ver. 51. We shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed; where the Apostle certainly speaks both of the Death and Change of these corruptible Bodies. 1 Thessal. 4. 14. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him: That is, the Bodies of those that died in the Lord shall be raised, and accompany him at his coming. So that it is the Body which is said in Scripture to sleep, and not the Soul. For that is utterly inconsistent with the *Apostle's* Assertion here in the *Text*, that *while we are in the Body we are absent from the Lord*, and that so soon as we depart out of the Body we shall be present with the Lord. For surely *to be with the Lord* must signify a state of Happiness, which Sleep is not, but only of Inactivity: Besides, that the *Apostle's* Argument would be very flat, and it would be but a cold Encouragement against the Fear of Death, that so soon as we are dead we shall fall asleep and become insensible. But the *Apostle* useth it as an Argument why we should be willing to die as soon as God pleaseth, and the sooner the better, because so soon as we quit these Bodies we shall be present with the Lord, that is, admitted to the blissful Sight and*

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Enjoyment of him : and while we abide in the Body we are detained from our Happiness : but if our Souls shall sleep as well as our Bodies till the general Resurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the Body or not, as to any Happiness we shall enjoy in the mean time ; which is directly contrary to the main Scope of the *Apostle's* Argument.

2. This Assertion of the *Apostle's* doth perfectly conclude against the feigned Purgatory of the Church of *Rome* ; which supposeth the far greater number of true and faithful Christians, of those who die in the Lord, and have obtained eternal Redemption by him from Hell, not to pass immediately into a State of Happiness, but to be detain'd in the Suburbs of Hell in extremity of Torment (equal to that of Hell for Degree, though not for Duration) till their Souls be purged, and the Guilt of temporal Punishments, which they are liable to, be some way or other paid off and discharged. They suppose indeed some very few holy Persons (especially those who suffer Martyrdom) to be so perfect at their departure out of the Body as to pass immediately into Heaven, because they need no Purgation : But most Christians they suppose to die so imperfect that they stand in need of being purged ; and according to the degree of their Imperfection are to be detain'd a shorter or a longer time in Purgatory.

But now, besides that there is no *Text* in *Scripture* from whence any such State can probably be concluded (as is acknowledged by many learned Men of the Church of *Rome*) and even that *Text* which they have most insisted upon (*they shall be saved, yet so as by Fire*) is given up by them as insufficient to conclude the thing. *Estius* is very glad to get off it, by saying there is nothing in it against Purgatory : why ? no-body pretends that, but we might reasonably expect that there should be something for it in a *Text* which hath been so often produced and urged by them for the proof of it. I say, besides that there is nothing in *Scripture* for Purgatory, there are a great many things against it, and utterly inconsistent with it. In the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, which was designed to represent to us the different States of good and bad Men in another World, there is not the least intimation of Purgatory, but that good Men pass immediately into a State of Happiness, and bad Men into a Place of Torment. And *St. John*, *Rev. 14. 13.* pronounceth all that die in the Lord happy, because *they rest from their Labours* ; which they cannot be said to do who are in a State of great Anguish and Torment, as those are supposed to be who are in Purgatory.

But above all, this Reasoning of *St. Paul* is utterly inconsistent with any imagination of such a State. For he encourageth all Christians in general against the Fear of Death from the Consideration of that happy State they should immediately pass into, by being admitted into the Presence of God ; which surely is not Purgatory. *We are of good courage* (says he) *and willing rather to be absent from the Body* : And great reason we should be so, if so soon as we leave the Body we are present with the Lord. But no Man sure would be glad to leave the Body to go into a Place of exquisite and extreme Torment, which they tell us is the Case of most Christians when they die. And what can be more unreasonable, than to make the *Apostle* to use an Argument to comfort all Christians against the Fear of Death, which concerns but very few in comparison ? So that if the *Apostle's* Reasoning be good, that while we are in this Life we are detained from our Happiness, and so soon as we depart this Life we pass immediately into it, and therefore Death is desirable to all good Men : I say if this Reasoning be good, it is very clear that *St. Paul* knew nothing of the Doctrine now taught in the Church of

Rome

Rome concerning Purgatory ; because that is utterly inconsistent with what he expressly asserts in this Chapter ; and quite takes away the force of his whole Argument.

3. To encourage us against the Fear of Death. And this is the Conclusion which the *Apostle* makes from this Consideration. *Therefore* (says he) *we are of good courage, knowing that whilst we converse in the Body we are absent from the Lord.* There is in us a natural Love of Life, and a natural Horror and Dread of Death ; so that our Spirits are apt to shrink at the thoughts of the approach of it. But this Fear may very much be mitigated, and even overruled by Reason and the Considerations of Religion. For Death is not so dreadful in it-self, as with regard to the Consequences of it : And those will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the Good, but dismal and miserable to the Wicked. So that the only true Antidote against the Fear of Death is the Hopes of a better Life ; and the only firm Ground of these Hopes is the Mercy of God in *Jesus Christ*, upon our due Preparation for another World by Repentance and a Holy Life. For the Sting of Death is Sin ; and when that is taken away the Terror and Bitterness of Death is past : And then Death is so far from being dreadful, that in reason it is extremely desirable ; because it lets us into a better State, such as only deserves the Name of Life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam è carcere evolaverunt : vestra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors est.* They truly live (could a Heathen say) who have made their Escape out of this Prison of the Body ; but that which Men commonly call Life is rather Death than Life. To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy ; and that we shall never be till we are got beyond the Grave.

4. This Consideration should comfort us under the Loss and Death of Friends, which certainly is one of the greatest Grievances and Troubles of human Life. For if they be fit for God, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was possible for them to have been in this World ; and the Trouble of their Absence from us is fully balanced by their being present with the Lord. For why should we lament the End of that Life which we are assured is the Beginning of Immortality ? One reason of our Trouble for the Loss of Friends is because we loved them : But it is no sign of our Love to them to grudge and repine at their Happiness. But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer : Be it so ; yet why should we be troubled that they are happy sooner than we expected ? But they are parted from us, and the Thought of this is grievous : But yet the Consideration of their being parted for a while is not near so sad, as the Hopes of a happy Meeting again, never to be parted any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our Love to them was, the less should be our Grief for them, when we consider that they are happy, and that they are safe ; past all Storms, all the Troubles and Temptations of this Life, and out of the reach of all Harm and Danger for ever. But though the Reason of our Duty in this case be very plain, yet the Practice of it is very difficult ; and when all is said, natural Affection will have its course : And even after our Judgment is satisfied, it will require some time to still and quiet our Passions.

5. This Consideration should wean us from the Love of Life ; and make us not only contented, but willing and glad to leave this World, whenever it shall please God to call us out of it. This Inference the *Apostle* makes, *ver. 8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord.* Though there were no State of Immortality after this

Life, yet methinks we should not desire to live always in this World. *Habet natura* (says Tully) *ut aliarum rerum, sic vivendi modum* : As Nature hath set bounds and measures to other things, so likewise to Life ; of which Men should know when they have enough, and not covet so much of it till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there were no other Inconvenience in a long Life, this is a great one, that in a long course of time, we unavoidably see a great many things which we would not ; our own Misfortunes and the Calamities of others ; publick Confusions and Distractions ; the loss of Friends and Relations ; or which is worse, their Misery, or which is worst of all, their Mischance : Especially, a very infirm and tedious Old-Age is very undesirable : For who would desire to live long uneasy to himself, and troublesome to others ? It is time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot live with the Good-will even of our Friends : when those who ought to love us best think much that we live so long, and can hardly forbear to give us broad Signs that they are weary of our Company. In such a case a Man would almost be contented to die out of Civility ; and not chuse to make any long stay where he sees that his Company is not acceptable. If we think we can be welcome to a better Place, and to a more delightful Society, why should we desire to thrust our selves any longer upon an ill-natur'd World, upon those who have much ado to refrain from telling us that our Room is better than our Company ?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous Old-Age, and the Taper of Life burns clear in them to the last : Their Understandings are good, their Memories and Senses tolerable, their Humour pleasant, and their Conversation acceptable, and their Relations kind and respectful to them. But this is a rare Felicity, and which seldom happens but to those who have lived wisely and virtuously, and by a religious and regular course of Life have preserved some of their best Spirits to the last, and have not by Vice and Extravagance drawn off Life to the Dregs, and left nothing to be enjoyed but Infirmities and ill Humours, Guilt, and Repentance, but on the contrary have prudently laid up some considerable Comforts and Supports for themselves against this Gloomy-day ; having stored their Minds with Wisdom and Knowledge, and taken care to secure to themselves the comfortable reflections of an useful and well-spent Life, and the Favour and Loving-kindness of God, which is better than Life it self. But generally the Extremities of Old-age are very peevish and querulous, and a declining and falling back to the weak and helpless condition of Infancy and Childhood. And yet less care is commonly taken to please Aged Persons, and less kindness shewed to them (unless it be in expectation of receiving greater from them) than to Children : because these are cherished in hopes, the others in despair of their growing better. So that if God see it good it is not desirable to live to try Nature, and the kindness and good-will of our Relations to the utmost.

Nay there is reason enough why we should be well contented to die in any Age of our Life. If we are young we have tasted the best of it : If in our middle Age, we have not only enjoyed all that is desirable of life, but almost all that is tolerable : If we are old, we are come to the dregs of it, and do but see the same things over and over again, and continually with less pleasure.

Especially if we consider the happiness from which we are all this while detained. This Life is but our Infancy and Childhood in comparison of the manly Pleasures and Employments of the other State. And why should we desire to be always Children ; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer ? In this sense that high Expression of the Poet is true,

— Dii

— *Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,
Quàm sit dulce mori.* —

The Gods conceal from Men the Sweetness of Dying, to make them patient and contented to live.

This Life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make sure to live well, and there is no need of living long. To the purpose of Preparation for another World, the best Life is the longest. Some live a great pace, and by continual Diligence and Industry in serving God and doing Good, do really dispatch more of the Business of Life in a few Years, than others do in a whole Age; who go such a santring Pace towards Heaven, as if they were in no haste to get thither. But if we were always prepared we should rejoice at the prospect of our End; as those who have been long tost at Sea are overjoyed at the sight of Land.

I have now done with my *Text*, but have another Subject to speak of; that excellent Man in whose Place I now stand; whom we all knew, and whom all that knew him well did highly esteem and reverence. He was born in *Shropshire* of a worthy and ancient Family, the 11th of *March* 1609. was the sixth Son of his Father: and being bred up to Learning, and very capable of it, was sent to the University of *Cambridge*, and planted there in *Emanuel-College*, where he was chosen Fellow, and was an excellent Tutor and Instructor of Youth, and bred up many Persons of Quality, and others who afterwards proved useful and eminent; as many perhaps as any Tutor of that Time.

About the Age of four or five and thirty he was made Provost of *King's-College*; where he was a most vigilant and prudent Governor, a great Encourager of Learning and good Order, and by his careful and wise Management of the Estate of the College, brought it into a very flourishing Condition, and left it so.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to dissemble it) that here he possess'd another Man's Place, who by the Iniquity of the Times was wrongfully ejected; I mean Dr. *Collins* the famous and learned Divinity-Professor of that University. During whose Life (and he lived many years after) by the free Consent of the College there were two shares out of the common Dividend allotted to the Provost, one whereof was constantly paid to Dr. *Collins*, as if he had been still Provost. To this Dr. *Whichcot* did not only give his Consent (without which the thing could not have been done) but was very forward for the doing of it, tho' hereby he did not only considerably lessen his own Profit, but likewise incur no small Censure and Hazard as the Times then were. And lest this had not been Kindness enough to that worthy Person, whose Place he possessed, in his last Will he left his Son, Sir *John Collins*, a Legacy of one hundred Pounds.

And as he was not wanting either in Respect or real Kindness to the rightful Owner, so neither did he stoop to do any thing unworthy to obtain that Place; for he never took the *Covenant*: And not only so, but by the particular Friendship and Interest which he had in some of the chief of the *Visitors*, he prevailed to have the greatest part of the Fellows of that College exempted from that Imposition; and preserved them in their Places by that means. And to the Fellows that were ejected by the *Visitors*, he likewise freely consented that their full Dividend for that Year should be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among these was the Reverend and Ingenious Dr.

Charles

Charles Mason ; upon whom after he was ejected, the College did confer a good Living which then fell in their Gift, with the Consent of the Provost, who, knowing him to be a worthy Man, was contented to run the hazard of the Displeasure of those Times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon such Terms to be in a Capacity to do good in bad Times.

For, besides his Care of the College, he had a very great and good Influence upon the University in general. Every Lord's-Day in the Afternoon, for almost twenty Years together, he preached in *Trinity-Church*, where he had a great number, not only of the young Scholars, but of those of greater Standing and best Repute for Learning in the University his constant and attentive Auditors : And in those Wild and unsettled Times contributed more to the forming of the Students of that University to a sober Sense of Religion than any Man in that Age.

After he left *Cambridge* he came to *London*, and was chosen Minister of *Black-Friars*, where he continu'd till the dreadful Fire ; and then retired himself to a Donative he had at *Milton* near *Cambridge* ; where he preached constantly, and relieved the Poor, and had their Children taught to read at his own Charge ; and made up Differences among the Neighbours. Here he stayed till by the Promotion of the Reverend Dr. *Wilkins*, his Predecessor in this Place, to the Bishoprick of *Chester*, he was by his Interest and Recommendation presented to this Church. But during the building of it, upon the Invitation of the Court of Aldermen, in the Mayoralty of Sir *William Turner*, he preached before that honourable Auditory at *Guild-Hall* Chappel every Sunday in the Afternoon with great Acceptance and Approbation, for about the space of seven years.

When his Church was built, he bestowed his Pains here twice a Week, where he had the general Love and Respect of his Parish ; and a very considerable and judicious Auditory, though not very numerous by reason of the Weakness of his Voice in his declining Age.

It pleased God to bless him, as with a plentiful Estate, so with a charitable Mind : Which yet was not so well known to many, because in the disposal of his Charity he very much affected Secresy. He frequently bestowed his Alms (as I am informed by those who best knew) on poor House-keepers disabled by Age or Sickness to support themselves, thinking those to be the most proper Objects of it. He was rather frugal in expence upon himself, that so he might have wherewithal to relieve the Necessities of others.

And he was not only charitable in his Life, but in a very bountiful manner at his Death ; bequeathing in pious and charitable Legacies to the value of a thousand Pounds. To the Library of the University of *Cambridge* fifty Pounds : and of *King's-College* one hundred Pounds : and of *Emanuel-College* twenty Pounds : to which College he had been a considerable Benefactor before ; having founded there several Scholarships to the value of a thousand Pounds, out of a Charity with the disposal whereof he was intrusted, and which not without great Difficulty and Pains he at last recovered.

To the Poor of the several Places where his Estate lay, and where he had been Minister, he gave above one hundred Pounds.

Among those who had been his Servants, or were so at his Death, he disposed in Annuities and Legacies in Money to the value of above three hundred Pounds.

To other charitable Uses and among the poorer of his Relations, above three hundred Pounds.

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To every one of his Tenants he left a Legacy according to the proportion of the Estate they held, by way of remembrance of him : and to one of them that was gone much behind he remitted in his Will seventy Pounds. And as became his great Goodness, he was ever a remarkably kind Landlord, forgiving his Tenants, and always making Abatements to them for hard years or any other accidental Losses that happened to them.

I must not omit the wise Provision he made in his Will to prevent Law-suits among the Legatees, by appointing two or three Persons of greatest Prudence and Authority among his Relations final Arbitrators of all Differences that should arise.

Having given this Account of his last Will, I come now to the sad part of all : sad I mean to us, but happiest to him. A little before *Easter* last he went down to *Cambridge* : where upon taking a great Cold, he fell into a Distemper which in a few days put a period to his Life. He died in the House of his ancient and most learned Friend Dr. *Cudworth*, Master of *Christ's College*. During his sickness he had a constant calmness and serenity of mind : and under all his bodily weakness possess his Soul in great patience. After the Prayers for the Visitation of the Sick (which he said were excellent Prayers) had been used, he was put in mind of receiving the Sacrament ; to which he answered, that he most readily embraced the Proposal : And after he had received it, said to Dr. *Cudworth*, I heartily thank you for this most Christian Office : I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this Sacrament ; adding this pious Ejaculation, *The Lord fulfil all his Declarations and Promises, and pardon all my Weaknesses and Imperfections*. He disclaimed all Merit in himself, and declared that whatever he was, he was through the Grace and Goodness of God in *Jesus Christ*. He expressed likewise great dislike of the Principles of Separation, and said, *he was the more desirous to receive the Sacrament, that he might declare his full Communion with the Church of Christ all the World over*. He disclaimed Popery, and, as things of near affinity with it, or rather Parts of it, *all Superstition and Usurpation upon the Consciences of Men*.

He thanked God, *that he had no Pain in his Body, nor Disquiet in his Mind*.

Towards his last he seemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this State ; not for any Pains he felt in himself, but for the Trouble he gave his Friends : saying to one of them who had with great Care attended him all along in his Sickness, *My dear Friend, thou hast taken a great deal of Pains to uphold a crazy Body, but it will not do : I pray thee give me no more Cordials ; for why shouldst thou keep me any longer out of that happy State to which I am going ? I thank God I hope in his Mercy, that it shall be well with me*.

And herein God was pleased particularly to answer those devout and well-weighed Petitions of his which he frequently used in his Prayer before Sermon, which I shall set down in his own Words, and I doubt not those that were his constant Hearers do well remember them, *And superadd this, O Lord, to all the Grace and Favour which thou hast shewn us all along in Life, not to remove us hence but with all advantage for Eternity, when we shall be in a due Preparation of Mind, in a holy Constitution of Soul, in a perfect renunciation of the guise of this mad and sinful World, when we shall be entirely resigned up to thee, when we shall have clear Acts of Faith in God by Jesus Christ, high and reverential Thoughts of thee in our Minds, enlarged and inflamed Affections toward thee, &c. And whensoever we shall come to leave this World, which will be when thou shalt appoint (for the issues of Life and Death are in thy hands) afford us such a mighty Power and Presence of thy Good Spirit, that we may have solid Consolation in believing, and avoid all*
Consternation

Consternation of Mind, all Doubtfulness and Uncertainty concerning our everlasting Condition, and at length depart in the Faith of God's Elect, &c. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright; for the end of that Man is Peace.

Thus you have the short History of the Life and Death of this eminent Person; whose just Character cannot be given in few Words, and time will not allow me to use many. To be able to describe him aright it were necessary one should be like him: for which reason I must content myself with a very imperfect Draught of him.

I shall not insist upon his exemplary Piety and Devotion towards God, of which his whole Life was one continued Testimony. Nor will I praise his profound Learning, for which he was justly had in so great Reputation. The moral Improvements of his Mind, a *God-like Temper and Disposition* (as he was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aspired after; that universal Charity and Goodness, which he did continually preach and practise.

His Conversation was exceeding kind and affable, grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He was slow to declare his Judgment, and modest in delivering it. Never passionate, never peremptory: so far from imposing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And though he had a most profound and well-poized Judgment, yet was he of all Men I ever knew the most patient to hear others differ from him, and the most easy to be convinced when good Reason was offered; and, which is seldom seen, more apt to be favourable to another Man's Reason than his own.

Studious and inquisitive Men commonly at such an Age (at forty or fifty at the utmost) have fixed and settled their Judgments in most Points, and as it were made their *last Understanding*; supposing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be said on all sides of things; and after that, they grow positive and impatient of Contradiction, thinking it a disparagement to them to alter their Judgment: But our deceased Friend was so wise, as to be willing to learn to the last; knowing that no Man can grow wiser without some Change of his Mind, without gaining some Knowledge which he had not, or correcting some Error which he had before.

He had attained so perfect a mastery of his Passions, that for the latter and greatest part of his Life he was hardly ever seen to be transported with Anger: and as he was extremely careful not to provoke any Man, so not to be provoked by any; using to say, *If I provoke a Man he is the worse for my Company, and if I suffer my-self to be provoked by him I shall be the worse for his.*

He very seldom reproved any Person in Company otherwise than by Silence, or some Sign of Uneasiness, or some very soft and gentle Word; which yet from the respect Men generally bore to him did often prove effectual. For he understood humane Nature very well, and how to apply himself to it in the most easy and effectual ways.

He was a great Encourager and kind Director of young Divines: and one of the most candid Hearers of Sermons, I think, that ever was: So that tho' all Men did mightily reverence his Judgment, yet no Man had reason to fear his Censure. He never spake well of himself, nor ill of others: making good that Saying of *Pansa* in *Tully*, *Neminem alterius, qui suæ consideret virtuti, invidere*; that *no man is apt to envy the Worth and Virtues of another, that hath any of his own to trust to.*

In a word, he had all those Virtues, and in a high degree, which an excellent Temper, great Consideration, long Care and Watchfulness over himself, together with the Assistance of God's Grace (which he continually implored, and mightily relied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he excelled in the Virtues of Conversation, Humanity, and Gentleness, and Humility, a prudent

prudent and peaceable and reconciling Temper. And God knows we could very ill at this time have spared such a Man; and have lost from among us as it were so much Balm for the healing of the Nation, which is now so miserably rent and torn by those Wounds which we madly give our-selves. But since God hath thought good to deprive us of him, let his Virtues live in our Memory, and his Example in our Lives. Let us endeavour to be what he was, and we shall one day be what he now is, of blessed memory on Earth, and happy for ever in Heaven.

And now methinks the Consideration of the Argument I have been upon, and of that great Example that is before us should raise our Minds above this World, and fix them upon the Glory and Happiness of the other. Let us then begin Heaven here, in the frame and Temper of our Minds, in our heavenly Affections and Conversation; in a due Preparation for, and in earnest Desires and Breathings after that blessed State which we firmly believe and assuredly hope to be one day possessed of: when we shall be removed out of this Sink of Sin and Sorrows into the Regions of Bliss and Immortality: where we shall meet all those worthy and excellent Persons who are gone before us, and whose Conversation was so delightful to us in this World; and will be much more so to us in the other, when the Spirits of just Men shall be made perfect, and shall be quit of all those Infirmities which did attend and lessen them in this mortal State; when we shall meet again with our dear Brother, and all those good Men whom we knew in this World, and with the Saints and excellent Persons of all Ages, to enjoy their blessed Friendship and Society for ever, in the Presence of the blessed God, where is *fulness of Joy, at whose Right-hand are Pleasures for evermore.*

In a firm persuasion of this happy State let us every one of us say with David, and with the same Ardency of Affection that he did, *As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God; My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; O when shall I come and appear before God?* that so the Life which we now live in this World may be a *patient continuance in well-doing in a joyful expectation of the blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:* To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.

Now the God of Peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good Work to do his Will; working in us always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be Glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

A Persuasive to frequent Communion.

I Cor. xi. 26, 27, 28.

For as oft as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.

MY Design in this Argument is, from the Consideration of the Nature of this Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, and of the perpetual Use of it to the end of the World, to awaken Men to a Sense of their Duty, and the great Obligation that lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make Men sensible of their Duty in this Particular, because in this last Age by the unwary Discourse of some concerning the Nature of this Sacrament and the Danger of receiving it unworthily, such Doubts and Fears have been raised in the Minds of Men as utterly to deter many, and in a great measure to discourage almost the generality of Christians from the use of it; to the great Prejudice and Danger of Men's Souls, and the visible Abatement of Piety, by the gross Neglect of so excellent a Means of our Growth and Improvement in it; and to the mighty Scandal of our Religion, by the general Disuse and Contempt of so plain and solemn an Institution of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I shall take occasion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of these four Points.

First, Of the *Perpetuity* of this Institution; this the *Apostle* signifies when he saith, that *by eating this Bread, and drinking this Cup, we do shew the Lord's Death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the Obligation that lies upon all Christians to a frequent observance of this Institution; this is signified in that Expression of the *Apostle* *as often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup*: which Expression consider'd and compar'd together with the Practice of the Primitive Church, does imply an Obligation upon Christians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to satisfy the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raised in the Mind's of Men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their great discouragement from their receiving this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought: which *Objections* are chiefly grounded upon

upon what the Apostle says, *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and doth eat and drink damnation to himself.*

Fourthly, What preparation of our selves is necessary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament : which will give me occasion to explain the Apostle's meaning in those Words, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

I. For the Perpetuity of this Institution, implied in those Words, *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's Death till he come*; or the Words may be read imperatively and by way of Precept, *shew ye forth the Lord's Death till he come.* In the three verses immediately before, the Apostle particularly declares the Institution of this Sacrament, with the manner and circumstances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the Apostles, but, as the Words seem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himself, ver. 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus in the same night that he was betrayed took Bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the Cup when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Institution is in these words, *this do in remembrance of me.* In which Words our Lord commands his Disciples after his Death to repeat these occasions of *taking and breaking and eating the Bread, and of drinking of the Cup*, by way of solemn Commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the Disciples only during their lives, or by all Christians afterwards in all successive Ages of the Church, is not so certain meerly from the force of these Words, *do this in remembrance of me*: but what the Apostle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Institution of this Sacrament was intended, not only for the Apostles, and for that Age, but for all Christians, and for all Ages of the Christian Church; *For as often as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come*: that is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the World. So that this Sacrament was designed to be a standing Commemoration of the Death and Passion of our Lord till he should come to Judgment; and consequently the Obligation that lies upon Christians to the observation of it is perpetual, and shall never cease to the end of the World.

So that it is a vain conceit and meer dream of the *Enthusiasts* concerning the *seculum Spiritus Sancti*, the Age and dispensation of the Holy Ghost, when, as they suppose, all human Teaching shall cease, and all external Ordinances and Institutions in Religion shall vanish, and there shall be no farther use of them. Whereas it is very plain from the *New Testament* that Prayer, and Outward Teaching, and the Use of the two Sacraments, were intended to continue among Christians in all Ages. As for Prayer, (besides our natural Obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed Religion) we are by our Saviour particularly exhorted to *watch and pray* with regard to the day of Judgment, and in consideration of the uncertainty of the time when it shall be: And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Christians till the day of Judgment, because it is prescribed as one of the best ways of Preparation for it. That *Outward Teaching* likewise and *Baptism* were intended to be perpetual is no less plain, because Christ hath expressly promised to be with the Teachers of his Church in the use of these Ordinances to the end of the World, *Matth. 28. 19, 20. Go and disciple all Nations, baptizing them in*

the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and lo I am with you always to the end of the world. Not only to the end of that particular Age, but to the end of the Gospel Age, and the consummation of all Ages, as the Phrase clearly imports. And it is as plain from this *Text*, that the *Sacrament of the Lords Supper* was intended for a perpetual Institution in the Christian Church, till the Second Coming of Christ, *viz.* his coming to Judgment: Because St. Paul tells us, that by these Sacramental Signs the Death of Christ is to be represented and commemorated till he comes. *Do this in remembrance of me: For as oft as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lords Death till he come.*

And if this be the End and Use of this Sacrament, to be a solemn Remembrance of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord during his absence from us, that is, till his coming to Judgment, then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the Second Coming of our Lord. The consideration whereof should mightily strengthen and encourage our Faith in the hope of Eternal Life so often as we partake of this Sacrament: since our Lord hath left it to us as a Memorial of himself till he come to translate his Church into Heaven, and as a sure Pledge that he will come again at the End of the World and invest us in that Glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we should comfort our selves with the thoughts of that blessed time when we shall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and shall be admitted to the great Feast of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God the Judge of all, and with our blessed and glorified Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect.

And the same consideration should likewise make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives. Because of that dreadful Sentence of condemnation which at the Second Coming of our Lord shall be past upon those, who by the profanation of this solemn Institution trample under foot the Son of God, and contemn the Blood of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which God hath ratified with Mankind by the Blood of his Son. The Apostle tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* This indeed is spoken of temporal Judgment (as I shall shew in the latter part of this Discourse,) but the Apostle likewise supposeth, that if these temporal Judgments had not their effect to bring Men to repentance, but they still persisted in the profanation of this holy Sacrament, they should at last *be condemned with the World.* For as he that partaketh worthily of this Sacrament confirms his interest in the Promises of the Gospel, and his Title to Eternal Life; so he that receives this Sacrament unworthily, that is without due Reverence, and without Fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in sin whilst he commemorates the Death of Christ, *who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,* this man aggravates and seals his own damnation, because he is guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in some sort the cause of his Sufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himself afresh the Lord of life and glory, and putting him to an open shame.* And when the great Judge of the World shall appear and pass final Sentence upon Men, such obstinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the dearest love of their dying Lord, nor be engaged to leave their sins by all the ties and obligations of this holy Sacrament, shall have their Potion with *Pilate and Judas, with the chief Priests and Soldiers,* who were the betrayers and Murtherers of the Lord of Life and Glory; and shall be dealt withal

as those who are in some sort *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*. Which severe threatening ought not to discourage Men from the Sacrament, but to deter all those from their sins who think of engaging themselves to God by so solemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means a sufficient Reason to make Men fly from the Sacrament, but certainly one of the most powerful Arguments in the World to make Men forsake their sins; as I shall shew more fully under the *third* head of this Discourse.

II. The *Obligation* that lies upon all Christians to the frequent observance and practice of this Institution. For though it be not necessarily implied in these Words, *as oft as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup*; yet if we compare these Words of the *Apostle*, with the Usage and Practice of Christians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy Sacrament so often as they solemnly met together to worship God, they plainly suppose and recommend to us the frequent use of this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon Christians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the Sense and Meaning of any Law or Institution is best understood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince Men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a suitable practice, I shall now endeavour with all the plainness and force of perswasion I can: And so much the more, because the neglect of it among Christians is grown so general, and a great many Persons from a superstitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I shall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Christians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament; each of them sufficient of it self, but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are oblig'd in point of *indispensable duty*, and in obedience to a plain Precept and most solemn Institution of our Blessed Saviour, that great *Lawgiver*, who is able to save and to destroy, as St. James calls him: He hath bid us *do this*. And St. Paul who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the Lord*, admonisheth us to do it *often*. Now for any Man that professeth himself a Christian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Institution of *Christ* is utterly inconsistent with such a Profession. To such our Lord may say as he did to the *Jews*, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* How far the ignorance of this Institution, or the mistakes which Men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect, is another consideration. But after we know our Lord's Will in this particular, and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no Cloak for our Sin. For nothing can excuse the wilful neglect of a plain Institution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of *Interest*. The Benefits which we expect to be derived and assured to us by this Sacrament are all the Blessings of the New Covenant, the Forgiveness of our sins, the Grace and Assistance of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform the Conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the Comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well-doing, and to support us under Sufferings; and the Glorious Reward of Eternal Life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own interest and happiness, we forsake our own Mercies, and judge our selves unworthy of all the Blessings of the Gospel, and deprive our selves of one of the

the best means and advantages of confirming and conveying these Blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our *Duty*, the consideration of our own *interest* should oblige us not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a means of promoting our own Comfort and Happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of *gratitude* to the careful observance of this Institution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in Charge when he was going to lay down his Life for us, *Do this in remembrance of me*. Men use religiously to observe the Charge of a dying Friend, and, unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to do what he desires: But this is the Charge of our best Friend (nay of the greatest Friend and Benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himself to die in our stead, and to offer up himself a Sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous Pains and Sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of Temporal Deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter Pains of Eternal Death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to do all this for us? Can we deny him this? so little grievous and burthensome in it self, so infinitely beneficial to us? Had such a Friend, and in such circumstances, bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only said, *do this in remembrance of me*; when he hath only commended to us one of the most natural and delightful Actions, as a fit Representation and Memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel Sufferings for our sakes; when he hath only enjoined us, in a thankful commemoration of his goodness, to meet at his Table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to grieve and wound him no more? Can we without the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying Charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great Friend and Lover of Souls; A Command so reasonable, so easie, so full of Blessings and Benefits to the faithful observers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince Men of their duty in this particular, and of the necessity of observing so plain an Institution of our Lord, that it were no hard thing to persuade Men to their interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold Blessings which all Christians believe to be promised and made good to the frequent and worthy Receivers of this Sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty? what should be the cause of all this backwardness which we see in Men to so plain, so necessary, and so beneficial a Duty? The truth is, Men have been greatly discouraged from this Sacrament by the unwary pressing and inculcating of two great truths; *the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the necessity of a due preparation for it*. Which brings me to the

- III. *Third Particular* I proposed, which was to endeavour to satisfy the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raised in the minds of Men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their great discouragement from the receiving of this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought. And these Objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apostle* says at the 27th verse. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*. And again ver. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*. Upon the mistake and misapplication of these *Texts* have been grounded two Objections of great force to discourage Men from this Sacrament, which I shall endeavour with all the tenderness and clearness I can to remove. *First*, That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way not to receive at all. *Secondly*, That so

so much Preparation and Worthiness being required in order to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of devout Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

1. That the Danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to receive it at all. But this Objection is evidently of no force if there be (as most certainly there is) as great or greater Danger on the other hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And so though the Danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the Danger of Neglecting and contemning a plain Institution of Christ is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refused to come to the *Marriage-feast* of the *King's Son*, and made light of that gracious Invitation, were at least as faulty as he who came without a *Wedding-Garment*. And we find in the conclusion of the *Parable*, that as he was severely punished for his Disrespect, so they were destroyed for their Disobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater Sign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament, than to partake of it without some due qualification. The greatest Indisposition that can be for this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad Man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue so, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of Reverence and Preparation, though much less than he ought: and surely it is very hard for Men to come to so solemn an Ordinance without some kind of religious Awe upon their Spirits, and without some good Thoughts and Resolutions, at least for the present. If a Man that lives in any known wickedness of Life do before he receive the Sacrament set himself seriously to be humbled for his Sins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's Grace and Assistance against them; and after the receiving of it does continue for some time in these good Resolutions, though after a while he may possibly relapse into the same Sins again; this is some kind of restraint to a wicked Life; and these good Moods and Fits of Repentance and Reformation are much better than a constant and uninterrupted Course of Sin: even this *righteousness*, which is but as the *Morning-cloud* and the *Early Dew* which so soon passeth away, is better than none.

And indeed scarce any Man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this Consideration be excited to some good Purposes, and put upon some sort of Endeavour to amend and reform his Life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil Habits, if he do with any competent degree of Sincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make use of this excellent Means and Instrument for the mortifying and subduing of his Lusts and for the obtaining of God's Grace and Assistance, it may please God by the use of these Means, so to abate the force and power of his Lusts, and to imprint such Considerations upon his Mind in the receiving of this holy Sacrament and preparing himself for it, that he may at last break off his wicked Course and become a good Man.

But, on the other hand, as to those who neglect this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to restrain them from the greatest Enormities of Life, and to give a check to them in their evil Course: nothing but the Penalty of human Laws, which Men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore Men used to be restrained from great and scandalous Vices by Shame and Fear of Disgrace, and would abstain from many Sins out of regard to their Honour and Reputation among Men: But Men have hardened their Faces in this degenerate Age, and those gentle Restraints of Modesty which governed and kept Men in order heretofore signify nothing now a-days: Blushing is out of fashion, and Shame is ceased from among the Children of Men.

But

But the Sacrament did always use to lay some kind of restraint upon the worst of Men : and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at least have some good effect upon them for a time : if it did not make Men good, yet it would make them resolve to be so, and leave some good Thoughts and Impressions upon their Minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad consequence, to discourage Men so much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years : And that many Men who were under some kind of check before, since they have been driven away from the Sacrament have quite let loose the Reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of Impiety and Vice. And among the many ill effects of our past Confusions, this is none of the least, That in many Congregations of this Kingdom, Christians were generally disused and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it : and being so, they must necessarily incur the Danger of unworthy receiving ; and therefore they had better wholly to abstain from it. By which it came to pass that in very many places this great and solemn Institution of the Christian Religion was almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it ; and the remembrance of Christ's Death even lost among Christians : So that many Congregations in *England* might justly have taken up the Complaint of the Woman at our Saviour's Sepulchre, *they have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid him.*

But surely Men did not well consider what they did, nor what the Consequences of it would be, when they did so earnestly dissuade Men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the Danger of unworthy receiving is great ; but the proper Inference and Conclusion from hence is not that Men should upon this Consideration be deterred from the Sacrament, but that they should be affrighted from their Sins, and from that wicked Course of Life which is an habitual Indisposition and Unworthiness. *St. Paul* indeed (as I observed before) truly represents, and very much aggravates the Danger of the unworthy receiving this Sacrament ; but he did not deter the *Corinthians* from it, because they had sometimes come to it without due Reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiss, and to come better prepared and disposed for the future. And therefore after that terrible Declaration in the Text, *Whoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, he does not add, Therefore let Christians take heed of coming to the Sacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due Reverence, not as to a common Meal, but to a solemn Participation of the Body and Blood of Christ ; *but let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

For, If this be a good reason to abstain from the Sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an Action in an undue manner, it were best for a bad Man to lay aside all Religion, and to give over the exercise of all the Duties of Piety, of Prayer, of reading and hearing the Word of God ; because there is a proportionable Danger in the unworthy and unprofitable Use of any of these. *The Prayer of the Wicked* (that is, of one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our Saviour gives us the same Caution concerning hearing the Word of God ; *Take heed how you hear.* And *St. Paul* tells us, that to those who are not reformed by the Doctrine of the Gospel, it is *the Savour of Death*, that is, deadly and damnable to such Persons.

But now will any Man from hence argue, that it is best for a wicked Man not to pray, nor to hear or read the Word of God, lest by so doing he should endanger and aggravate his Condemnation ? And yet there is as much reason from this Consideration to persuade Men to give over praying and attending

tending to God's Word, as to lay aside the Use of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the Word of God unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great Contempt of God and of our blessed Saviour; and by his indevout Prayers and unfruitful Hearing of God's Word does further and aggravate his own Damnation: I say, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high Contempt of Christ, and *eats drinks his own Judgment*; so that the Danger of the unworthy performing this so sacred an Action, is no otherwise a reason to any Man to abstain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to cast off all Religion. He that unworthily useth or performs any part of Religion is in an evil and dangerous Condition; but he that casts off all Religion plungeth himself into a most desperate State, and does certainly damn himself to avoid the Danger of Damnation: Because he that casts off all Religion throws off all the means whereby he should be reclaimed and brought into a better State. I cannot more fitly illustrate this matter than by this plain Similitude: He that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his Health and his Life, but he that to avoid this Danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very short space.

There are some conscientious Persons, who abstain from the Sacrament upon an apprehension that the Sins which they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake; our Saviour having so plainly declared that all manner of Sin shall be forgiven Men except the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; such as was that of the *Pharisees*, who as our Saviour tells us blasphemed the Holy Ghost in ascribing those great Miracles which they saw him work, and which he really wrought by the Spirit of God, to the Power of the Devil. Indeed to sin deliberately after so solemn an Engagement to the contrary is a great Aggravation of Sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable. But the Neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to prevent these Sins; but, on the contrary, the constant receiving of it with the best Preparation we can is one of the most effectual means to prevent Sin for the future, and to obtain the Assistance of God's Grace to that end: And if we fall into Sin afterwards, we may be renewed by Repentance; *for we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the Propitiation for our Sins*, and as such, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this blessed Sacrament of his Body broken, and his Blood shed for the remission of our Sins. Can we think that the Primitive Christians, who so frequently received this holy Sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate Sin? Undoubtedly, many of them did; but far be it from us to think that such Sins were unpardonable, and that so many good Men should because of their careful and conscientious Observance of our Lord's Institution unavoidably fall into Condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter: such groundless Fears and Jealousies as these may be a sign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a sign of an injudicious Mind. For if we stand upon these Scruples, no man perhaps was ever so worthily prepared to draw near to God in any Duty of Religion, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his Mind, and the degree of his Preparation. But if we prepare our-selves as well as we can, this is all God expects. And for our fears of falling into Sin afterwards, there is this plain answer to be given to it; that the Danger of falling into Sin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament, but increased: because a powerful and probable means of preserving Men from Sin is neglected. And why should not every sincere Christian, by the receiving of this Sacrament and re-

newing his Covenant with God, rather hope to be confirmed in Goodness, and to receive farther Assistances of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to strengthen him against Sin, and to enable him to subdue it; than trouble himself with Fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no sufficient reason to keep any Man from the Sacrament? We cannot surely entertain so unworthy a thought of God and our Blessed Saviour, as to imagine that he did institute the Sacrament not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a Snare, and an occasion of our Ruine and Damnation. This were to pervert the gracious Design of God, and to turn the Cup of Salvation into a Cup of deadly Poison to the Souls of Men.

All then that can reasonably be inferred from the Danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this consideration Men should be quickned to come to the Sacrament with a due Preparation of Mind, and so much the more to fortify their Resolutions of living suitably to that holy Covenant which they solemnly renew every time they receive this holy Sacrament. This consideration ought to convince us of the absolute necessity of a Good Life, but not to deter us from the use of any Means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned *Divine* says very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none but those that do not understand it, but those who are unwilling to be tied to their Duty and are afraid of being engaged to use their best diligence to keep the Commandments of Christ: And such Persons have no reason to fear being in a worse Condition, since they are already in so bad a State. And thus much may suffice for answer to the *First Objection* concerning the great Danger of unworthy receiving this holy Sacrament. I proceed to the

2. *Obje.*

Second Objection, which was this; That so much Preparation and Worthiness being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

For a full Answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour briefly to clear these three things. *First*, That every degree of Imperfection in our Preparation for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for men to refrain from it. *Secondly*, That a total want of a due Preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet it does by no means excuse our neglect of it. *Thirdly*, That the proper Inference and conclusion from the total want of a due Preparation is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immediately to set upon the work of Preparation that so we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out these three things, I hope this Objection is fully answer'd.

1. That every degree of Imperfection in our Preparation for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for Men to abstain from it: For then no Man should ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and respects duly qualified to approach the presence of God in any of the Duties of his Worship and Service? Who can wash his hands in innocency, that so he may be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? *There is not a Man on Earth that lives and sins not.* The Graces of the best Men are imperfect; and every Imperfection in Grace and Goodness is an Imperfection in the Disposition and Preparation of our Minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our Sins, and sincerely resolve to obey and perform the Terms of the Gospel, and of that Covenant which we entered into by Baptism, and are going solemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at least in some degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently,

frequently, that by this spiritual Food of God's appointing, by *this living Bread which comes down from Heaven* our Souls may be nourish'd in Goodness, and new Strength and Virtue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our Hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of God's Commandments with more Constancy and Delight. For the way *to grow in Grace* and to be *strengthened with all might in the inner man*, and to *abound in all the fruits of Righteousness which by Christ Jesus are to the Praise and Glory of God*, is with Care and Conscience to use those means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the use of these means, it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his Grace and Assistance. We may tire our-selves with our Devotions and fill Heaven with vain Complaints, and yet by all this Importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: Like lazy Beggars that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themselves and better their Condition, and therefore are never like to move the Pity and Compassion of others. If we expect God's Grace and Assistance, we must work out our own Salvation in the careful use of all those Means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of Goodness which Men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it. And therefore it is a preposterous thing for Men to insist upon having the End before they will use the Means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due Preparation, not only in the Degree but in the Main and Substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuse our neglect of it. One Fault may draw on another, but can never excuse it. It is our great Fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no Man can claim any Benefit by his Fault, or plead it in excuse or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of Preparation and an absolute Unworthiness is Impenitency in an evil Course, a Resolution to continue a bad Man, not to quit his Lusts and to break off that wicked Course he hath lived in: But is this any excuse for the neglect of our Duty, that we will not fit our-selves for the doing of it with Benefit and Advantage to our-selves? A Father commands his Son to ask him Blessing every day, and is ready to give it him; but so long as he is undutiful to him in his other Actions, and lives in open Disobedience, forbids him to come in his sight. He excuseth himself from asking his Father Blessing, because he is undutiful in other things, and resolves to continue so. This is just the case of neglecting the Duty God requires, and the Blessings he offers to us in the Sacrament, because we have made our-selves incapable of so performing the one as to receive the other; and are resolved to continue so. We will not do our Duty in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the Sacrament.

3. The proper Inference and Conclusion from a total want of due Preparation for the Sacrament is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to set about the Work of Preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any Benefit; nay by doing it in such a manner render their condition much worse, this is a most forcible Argument to Repentance and Amendment of Life: There is nothing reasonable in this case but immediately to resolve upon a better Course, that so we may be meet Partakers of those holy Mysteries, and may no longer provoke God's Wrath against us by the wilful neglect of so great and necessary a Duty of the Christian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, so long as we do wilfully refuse to fit and qualify our-selves for the due and worthy

performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like case; A Pardon is graciously offered to a Rebel, he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself because he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? because he resolves to be a Rebel, and then his Pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his Crime. Very true: and it will be no less an aggravation that he refuseth it for such a reason, and under a pretence of Modesty does the most imprudent thing in the world. This is just the case; and in this case there is but one thing reasonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himself capable of the Benefit as soon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: but to excuse himself from accepting of the Benefit offered, because he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor ever intends to be so, is as if a Man should desire to be excused from being happy because he is resolved to play the fool and to be miserable. So that whether our want of Preparation be total, or only to some degree, it is every way unreasonable: If it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; if it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the Impediment, by making such Preparation as is necessary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

- IV. IV. *Fourth* and last thing I proposed, viz. what Preparation of our-selves is necessary in order to the worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I told you would give me occasion to explain the *Apostle's* meaning in the last part of the *Text*, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup*. I think it very clear from the occasion and circumstances of the *Apostle's* Discourse concerning the Sacrament that he does not intend the examination of our state, whether we be Christians or not, and sincerely resolve to continue so; and consequently that he does not here speak of our habitual Preparation by the resolution of a Good Life. This he takes for granted, that they were Christians and resolved to continue and persevere in their Christian Profession: But he speaks of their actual Fitness and Worthiness at that time when they came to receive the Lord's-Supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we must consider what it was that gave occasion to this discourse. At the 20th *verse* of this *Chapter* he sharply reproves their irreverent and unsuitable carriage at the Lord's-Supper. They came to it very disorderly, *one before another*. It was the custom of Christians to meet at their *Feast of Charity*, in which they did communicate with great Sobriety and Temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper. Now among the *Corinthians* this Order was broken: The Rich met, and excluded the Poor from this common Feast. And after an irregular Feast (one before another eating his own Supper as he came) they went to the Sacrament in great disorder; *one was hungry*, having eaten nothing at all; *others were drunk*, having eaten intemperately; and the Poor were despised and neglected. This the *Apostle* condemns as a great Profanation of that solemn Institution of the Sacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved themselves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common Supper or Feast. And this he calls *not discerning the Lord's Body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the Sacrament and a common Meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls *eating and drinking unworthily*: for which he pronounceth them *guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, which were represented and commemorated in their *eating of that Bread and drinking of that Cup*. By which irreverent and contemptuous usage of the Body and Blood of our Lord, he tells them that they did incur the Judgment of God; which he calls *eating and drinking their own Judgment*. For that the word *αἰσίων*, which our Translators render
- Damnation,*

Damnation, does not here signify eternal Condemnation, but a temporal Judgment and Chastisement in order to the prevention of eternal Condemnation is evident from what follows; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Judgment to himself*: And then he says, *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*: that is, for this Irreverence of theirs God hath sent among them several Diseases, of which many had died. And then he adds, *For if we would judge our-selves, we should not be judged. If we would judge our-selves*; whether this be meant of the publick Censures of the Church, or our private Censuring of our-selves in order to our future Amendment and Reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think most probable, then *judging* here is much the same with *examining our-selves*, v. 28. And then the *Apostle's* meaning is, that if we would censure and examine our-selves, so as to be more careful for the future, we should escape the Judgment of God in these temporal Punishments. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. But when we are judged*; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge our-selves we provoke God to judge us: *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*; that is, he inflicts these temporal Judgments upon us to prevent our eternal Condemnation. Which plainly shews, that the Judgment here spoken of is not eternal Condemnation. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment*: where the *Apostle* plainly shews both what was the Crime of unworthy receiving, and the Punishment of it. Their Crime was, their irreverent and disorderly participation of the Sacrament; and their Punishment was, those temporal Judgments which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to understand the Precept of examination of our-selves *before we eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup. But let a man examine himself*; that is, consider well with himself what a sacred Action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this Sacrament instituted by our Lord in memorial of his Body and Blood, that is, of his Death and Passion: And if heretofore he have been guilty of any Disorder and Irreverence (such as the *Apostle* here taxeth them withal) let him censure and *judge himself* for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future; and having thus *examined himself, let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup*. This, I think, is the plain sense of the *Apostle's* Discourse; and that if we attend to the Scope and Circumstances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, Is this all the Preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any Irreverence and Disorder in the celebration of it; I answer in short, this was the particular Unworthiness with which the *Apostle* taxeth the *Corinthians*; and which he warns them to amend, as they desire to escape the Judgments of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, so unsuitable to the holy Sacrament. He finds no other fault with them at present in this matter, though any other sort of Irreverence will proportionably expose Men to the like Punishment. He says nothing here of their habitual Preparation, by the sincere purpose and resolution of a Good Life answerable to the Rules of the Christian Religion: This we may suppose he took for granted. However, it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other Religious Duty. Not but that it is very true that none but those who do heartily embrace the Christian Religion and are sincerely resolved to frame their Lives according to the Holy Rules
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and Precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this solemn Acknowledgment and Profession of it. So that it is a Practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, because it is of great use, for Christians by way of Preparation for the Sacrament to examine themselves in a larger sense than in all probability the *Apostle* here intended: I mean, to examine our past Lives and the Actions of them in order to a sincere Repentance of all our Errors and Miscalriages, and to fix us in the steady Purpose and Resolution of a better Life: particularly, when we expect to have the Forgiveness of our Sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all Enmity, and thoughts of Revenge, and heartily forgive those that have offended us, and put in practice that universal Love and Charity which is represented to us by this holy Communion. And to this purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the publick Office of the Communion by way of due Preparation and disposition for it, to *repent us truly of our Sins past, to amend our Lives, and to be in perfect Charity with all Men, that so we may be meet Partakers of those holy Mysteries.*

And because this work of Examining our-selves concerning our state and condition, and of exercising Repentance towards God and Charity towards Men is incumbent upon us as we are Christians, and can never be put in practice more seasonably and with greater advantage than when we are meditating of this Sacrament, therefore besides our habitual Preparation by Repentance and the constant endeavours of a Holy Life, it is a very pious and commendable Custom in Christians before their coming to the Sacrament to set apart some particular time for this work of Examination. But how much time every person should allot to this purpose is matter of Prudence; and as it need not, so neither indeed can it be precisely determined. Some have greater reason to spend more time upon this work than others; I mean those whose accounts are heavier, because they have long run upon the score and neglected themselves: And some also have more leisure and freedom for it, by reason of their easy Condition and Circumstances in the World; and therefore are obliged to allow a greater Portion of time for the exercises of Piety and Devotion. In general, no man ought to do a Work of so great moment and concernment slightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other Actions, the End is principally to be regarded. Now the End of examining our-selves is to understand our state and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiss in our-selves. And provided this End be obtained, the Circumstances of the means are less considerable: whether more or less time be allowed to this work, it matters not so much, as to make sure that the work be thoroughly done.

And I do on purpose speak thus cautiously in this matter, because some pious persons do perhaps err on the stricter hand, and are a little superstitious on that side; insomuch that unless they can gain so much time to set apart for a solemn Preparation, they will refrain from the Sacrament at that time; though otherwise they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the *Apostle* says in another case about the Sacrament, *shall I praise them in this? I praise them not.* For, provided there be no wilful neglect of due Preparation, it is much better to come so prepared as we can, nay I think it is our duty so to do, rather than to abstain upon this *punctilio*. For when all is done, the best Preparation for the Sacrament is the general care and endeavour of a Good Life: And he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular foresight of that opportunity. And I think in that case such a one shall do much better to receive than to refrain; because he is habitually prepared for the Sacrament, though he had no time to make such actual Preparation as he desired. And if this were not allowable, how could Ministers
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communicate with Sick Persons at all times, or persuade others to do it many times upon very short and sudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the Primitive Christians, who received the Sacrament so frequently, that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as essential and necessary a part of their publick Worship as any other part of it whatsoever, even as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and interpreting the Word of God: I say, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it so constantly, could allot any more time for a solemn Preparation for it, than they did for any other part of Divine Worship: And consequently, that the *Apostle* when he bids the *Corinthians* examine themselves could mean no more than that considering the Nature and Ends of this Institution they should come to it with great Reverence; and reflecting upon their former Miscarriages in this matter, should be careful upon his Admonition to avoid them for the future and to amend what had been amiss: which to do, requires rather Resolution and Care than any long time of Preparation.

I speak this, that devout Persons may not be intangled in an apprehension of a greater necessity than really there is of a long and solemn Preparation every time they receive the Sacrament. The great necessity that lies upon Men is to live as becomes Christians, and then they can never be absolutely unprepared. Nay, I think this to be a very good Preparation; and I see not why Men should not be very well satisfied with it, unless they intend to make the same use of the Sacrament that many of the Papists do of Confession and Absolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that so they may begin to sin again upon a new score.

But because the Examination of our-selves is a thing so very useful, and the time which Men are wont to set apart for their Preparation for the Sacrament is so advantageous an Opportunity for the Practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend those who take this occasion to search and try their ways, and to call themselves to a more solemn account of their Actions. Because this ought to be done some time, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps some would never find time to recollect themselves and to take the condition of their Souls into serious consideration, were it not upon this solemn occasion.

The sum of what I have said is this, that supposing a Person to be habitually prepared by a religious Disposition of Mind and the general Course of a good Life, this more solemn actual Preparation is not always necessary: And it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual Preparation is, the better. For no Man can examine himself too often, and understand the state of his Soul too well, and exercise Repentance, and renew the Resolutions of a good Life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the Lord's Table, there to commemorate his Death, and to renew our Covenant with him to live as becomes the Gospel.

All the Reflection I shall now make upon this Discourse, shall be from the Consideration of what has been said earnestly to excite all that profess and call themselves Christians to a due Preparation of themselves for this holy Sacrament, and a frequent Participation of it according to the Intention of our Lord and Saviour in the Institution of it, and the undoubted Practice of Christians in the primitive and best Times, when Men had more Devotion and fewer Scruples about their Duty.

If we do in good earnest believe that this Sacrament was instituted by our Lord in remembrance of his dying Love, we cannot but have a very high value and esteem for it upon that account. Methinks so often as we read
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in the Institution of it those Words of our dear Lord, *do this in remembrance of me*, and consider what he who said them did for us, this dying charge of our best Friend should stick with us and make a strong Impression upon our Minds: Especially if we add to these, those other Words of his, not long before his Death, *Greater Love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend; ye are my Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you*. It is a wonderful Love which he hath expressed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this blessed Sacrament. And shall this charge laid upon us by him who laid down his Life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the solemn remembrance of that unparallel'd Kindness which is the Fountain of so many Blessings and Benefits to us? It is a sign we have no great sense of the Benefit when we are so unmindful of our Benefactor as to forget him days without number. The Obligation he hath laid upon us is so vastly great, not only beyond all Requital, but beyond all Expression, that if he had commanded us some very grievous thing we ought with all the readiness and cheerfulness in the World to have done it; how much more when he hath imposed upon us so easy a Commandment, a thing of no burthen but of immense Benefit? when he hath only said to us, *Eat O Friends, and drink O beloved*? when he only invites us to his Table, to the best and most delicious Feast that we can partake of on this side Heaven?

If we seriously believe the great Blessings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we should be so far from neglecting them, that we should heartily thank God for every opportunity he offers to us of being made Partakers of such Benefits. When such a Price is put into our hands, shall we want Hearts to make use of it? Methinks we should long with *David* (who saw but a shadow of these Blessings) to be satisfied with the Good-things of God's House, and to draw near his Altar; and should cry out with him, *O when shall I come and appear before thee! My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord, and my Flesh crieth out for the living God*. And if we had a just esteem of things, we should account it the greatest Infelicity and Judgment in the World to be debarred of this Privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our-selves of.

We exclaim against the Church of *Rome* with great Impatience, and with a very just Indignation, for robbing the People of half of this blessed Sacrament, and taking from them the *Cup of Blessing, the Cup of Salvation*; and yet we can patiently endure for some Months, nay Years, to exclude our-selves wholly from it. If no such great Benefits and Blessings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do why do we by our own neglect deprive our-selves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our Graces and our slow progress and improvement in Christianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best Means of our growth in Goodness. Well do we deserve that God should send Leanness into our Souls, and make them to consume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God himself doth spread so bountiful a Table for us, and set before us the Bread of Life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulness.

SERMON XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation.

CONCERNING the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, one of the two great positive Institutions of the Christian Religion, there are two main Points of difference between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*. One, about the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the Scripture and the Words of our Saviour on their side: The other, about the Administration of this Sacrament to the People in both kinds; in which we are sure that we have the Scripture and our Saviour's Institution on our side; and that so plainly that our Adversaries themselves do not deny it.

Of the *first* of these I shall now treat, and endeavour to shew against the Church of *Rome*, *That in this Sacrament there is no substantial change made of the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Body and Blood of Christ; that Body which was born of the Virgin-Mary, and suffered upon the Cross; for so they explain that hard Word Transubstantiation.*

Before I engage in this Argument, I cannot but observe what an unreasonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our Adversaries, to dispute a matter of Sense; which is one of those things about which *Aristotle* hath long since pronounced there ought to be no dispute.

It might well seem strange if any Man should write a Book, to prove that an *Egg* is not an *Elephant*, and that a *Musket-bullet* is not a *Pike*: It is every whit as hard a Case, to be put to maintain by a long Discourse, that what we see and handle and taste to be *Bread*, is *Bread* and not the *Body of a Man*; and what we see and taste to be *Wine*, is *Wine*, and not *Blood*: And if this Evidence may not pass for sufficient without any farther proof, I do not see why any Man, that hath confidence enough to do so, may not deny any thing to be what all the World sees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the World sees it is not: and this without all possibility of being farther confuted. So that the business of *Transubstantiation* is not a Controversie of Scripture against Scripture, or of Reason against Reason, but of downright Impudence against the plain meaning of Scripture, and all the Sense and Reason of Mankind.

It is a most Self-evident Falshood; and there is no Doctrine or Proposition in the World that is of it self more evidently true, than *Transubstantiation* is evidently false: And yet if it were possible to be true, it would be the most ill-natured and pernicious Truth in the World, because it would suffer nothing else to be true; it is like the *Roman Catholick Church*, which will needs be the whole Christian Church, and will allow no other Society of Christians to be any part of it: So *Transubstantiation*, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing else is true; for it cannot be true unless our Senses, and the Senses of all mankind be deceived about their proper Objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing else can be so; for if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.

And yet notwithstanding all this, there are a Company of Men in the World so abandon'd and given up by God to the efficacy of delusion as in good earnest to believe this gross and palpable Errour, and to impose the belief of it upon the Christian World under no less Penalties than of Temporal Death

and Eternal Damnation. And therefore to undeceive, if possible, these deluded Souls, it will be necessary to examine the pretended Grounds of so false a Doctrine, and to lay open the monstrous absurdity of it.

And in the handling of this Argument, I shall proceed in this plain method.

I. I shall consider the pretended Grounds and Reasons of the Church of Rome for this Doctrine.

II. I shall produce our *Objections* against it. And if I can shew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible Objections against it, then every Man is not only in reason excused from believing this Doctrine, but hath great cause to believe the contrary.

FIRST, I will consider the pretended Grounds and Reasons of the Church of Rome for this Doctrine. Which must be one or more of these *five*. Either 1st. The Authority of Scripture. Or 2^{ly}. The perpetual belief of this Doctrine in the Christian Church, as an evidence that they always understood and interpreted our Saviour's Words, *This is my Body*, in this Sense. Or 3^{ly}. The Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith. Or 4^{ly}. The absolute necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the Comfort and Benefit of those who receive this Sacrament. Or 5^{ly}. To magnifie the Power of the Priest in being able to work so great a Miracle.

1st. They pretend for this Doctrine the Authority of Scripture in those Words of our Saviour, *This is my Body*. Now to shew the insufficiency of this pretence, I shall endeavour to make good these *two* things.

1. That there is no necessity of understanding those Words of our Saviour in the Sense of *Transubstantiation*.

2. That there is a great deal of reason, nay that it is very absurd and unreasonable, to understand them otherwise.

First, that there is no necessity to understand those Words of our Saviour in the Sense of *Transubstantiation*. If there be any, it must be from one of these two Reasons. Either because there are no figurative expressions in Scripture, which I think no Man ever yet said: or else, because a Sacrament admits of no Figures; which would be very absurd for any Man to say, since it is of the very nature of a Sacrament to represent and exhibit some invisible Grace and Benefit by an outward Sign and Figure: And especially since it cannot be denied, but that in the Institution of this very Sacrament our Saviour useth figurative Expressions, and several Words which cannot be taken strictly and literally. When he gave the Cup he said, *This Cup is the new Testament in my Blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of Sins*.

Where first, the Cup is put for the Wine contained in the Cup; or else if the Words be literally taken, so as to signifie a substantial change, it is not of the Wine but of the Cup; and that, not into the Blood of Christ but into the New Testament or New Covenant in his Blood. Besides, that his Blood is said then to be shed, and his Body to be broken, which was not till his Passion, which followed the Institution and first Celebration of this Sacrament.

But that there is no necessity to understand our Saviour's Words in the sense of *Transubstantiation*, I will take the plain concession of a great number of the most learned Writers of the Church of Rome in this Controversy, (a) Bellarmine, (b) Suarez and (c) Vasquez do acknowledge Scotus the great Schoolman to have said that this Doctrine cannot be evidently proved from Scripture: And Bellarmine grants this not to be improbable; and Suarez and Vasquez acknowledge (d) Durandus to have said as much. (e) Ocham

(a) de Euch.
l. 3. c. 23.
(b) in 3. dist.
49. Qu. 75.
Sect. 2.
(c) in 3.
part. dist.
180. Qu.
75. art. 2.
c. 15.
(d) in Sent.
l. 4. dist. 11.
Qu. 1. n.
15.
(e) in 4.
Sent. Q. 5.
& Quodl.
4. Q. 3.

cham another famous Schoolman, says expressly, that *the Doctrine which holds the substance of the Bread and Wine to remain after Consecration is neither repugnant to Reason nor to Scripture.* (f) *Petrus ab Alliaco* Cardinal of Cambray says (f) in 4. plainly, that *the Doctrine of the Substance of Bread and Wine remaining after Consecration is more easie and free from absurdity, more rational, and no ways repugnant to the authority of Scripture*; nay more, that for the other Doctrine, viz. of Transubstantiation, there is no evidence in Scripture. (g) *Gabriel Biel*, (g) in *ta-* another great Schoolman and Divine of their Church, freely declares, that *non Miss. Lect. 40.* as to any thing exprest in the Canon of the Scriptures, a Man may believe that the substance of Bread and Wine doth remain after Consecration: and therefore he resolves the belief of Transubstantiation into some other Revelation, besides Scripture, which he supposeth the Church had about it. Cardinal (h) Ca- (h) in *A-* jetan confesseth that *the Gospel doth now here express that the Bread is changed in-* *quin. 3. part. Qu. 75. art. 1.* to the Body of Christ; that we have this from the authority of the Church: nay, he goes farther, that there is nothing in the Gospel which enforceth any Man to understand these Words of Christ; this is my Body, in a proper and not in a metaphorical sense; but the Church having understood them in a proper sense they are to be so explained: Which Words in the Roman Edition of Cajetan are expunged by order of Pope (i) Pius V. Cardinal (k) Contarenus, and (l) Melchior Canus one (i) *Agid. Conick. de Sacram. Q. 75. art. 1. n. 13.* of the best and most judicious Writers that Church ever had, reckon this Doctrine among those which are not so expressly found in Scripture. I will add but one more of great authority in the Church, and a reputed Martyr, (m) *Fisher* Bishop of Rochester who ingenuously confesseth that in the Words of (k) *de Sa- cram. l. 2. c. 3.* the Institution there is not one Word from whence the true presence of the Flesh and (l) *Loc. Theolog. l. 3. c. 3.* Blood of Christ in our Mass can be proved: So that we need not much contend (m) *contra captiv. Ba- bylon. c. 10. n. 2.* that this Doctrine hath no certain foundation in Scripture, when this is so fully and frankly acknowledged by our Adversaries themselves.

Secondly, If there be no necessity of understanding our Saviour's Words in the sense of Transubstantiation, I am sure there is a great deal of Reason to understand them otherwise. Whether we consider the like Expressions in Scripture; as where our Saviour says he is *the Door* and *the true Vine* (which the Church of Rome would mightily have triumph'd in, had it been said, *this is my true Body.*) And so likewise where the Church is said to be *Christ's Body*; and the *Rock* which followed the *Israelites* to be *Christ*, 1 Cor. 10. 4. *They drank of that Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ*: All which and innumerable more like Expressions in Scripture every Man understands in a figurative, and not in a strictly literal and absurd sense. And it is very well known, that in the Hebrew Language things are commonly said to be that which they do signifie and represent; and there is not in that Language a more proper and usual way of expressing a thing to signifie so and so, than to say that it is so and so. Thus Joseph expounding Pharoah's dream to him, Gen. 41. 26. says *the seven good Kine are seven Years, and the seven good Ears of Corn are seven Tears*, that is, they signified or represented seven Years of Plenty; and so Pharoah understood him, and so would any Man of sense understand the like Expressions; nor do I believe that any sensible Man who had never heard of Transubstantiation being grounded upon these Words of our Saviour, *this is my Body*, would upon reading the Institution of the Sacrament in the Gospel ever have imagin'd any such thing to be meant by our Saviour in those Words; but would have understood his meaning to have been *this Bread signifies my Body, this Cup signifies my Blood*; and this which you see me now do, do ye hereafter for a Memorial of me: But surely it would never have entred into any Man's mind to have thought that our Saviour did literally hold himself in his hand, and give away himself from himself with

his own hands. Or whether we compare these Words of our Saviour with the ancient Form of the Passover used by the Jews from Ezra's time, as (n) Justin Martyr tells us, τὸ τὸ πάχα ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν, *this Passover is our Saviour and our Refuge*: not that they believed the Pascal Lamb to be substantially changed either into God their Saviour who delivered them out of the Land of Egypt, or into the *Messias* the Saviour whom they expected and who was signified by it: But this Lamb which they did eat did represent to them and put them in mind of that Salvation which God wrought for their Fathers in Egypt, when by the slaying of a Lamb and sprinkling the Blood of it upon their Doors their First-born were passed over and spared; and did likewise foreshew the Salvation of the *Messias*, the Lamb of God that was to take away the Sins of the World.

(n) Dialog.
cum Tryp.
p. 297. E.
dit. Paris.
1639.

And nothing is more common in all Languages than to give the Name of the thing signified to the Sign, as the delivery of a Deed or Writing under Hand and Seal is call'd a Conveyance or making over of such an Estate, and it is really so; not the delivery of meer Wax and Parchment, but the conveyance of a real Estate, as truly and really to all effects and purposes of Law, as if the very material Houses and Lands themselves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: In like manner the Names of the things themselves made over to us in the new Covenant of the Gospel between God and Man, are given to the Signs or Seals of that Covenant. By Baptism Christians are said to be *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, Heb. 6. 4. And by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we are said to *communicate* or to be made partakers of the *Body of Christ* which was broken, and of his *Blood* which was shed for us, that is, of the real Benefits of his Death and Passion. And thus St. Paul speaks of this Sacrament, 1 Cor. 10. 16. *The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* But still it is Bread, and he still calls it so; v. 17. *For we being many are one Bread and one Body; for we are partakers of that one Bread.* The Church of Rome might, if they pleased, as well argue from hence that all Christians are substantially changed first into Bread, and then into the natural Body of Christ by their participation of the Sacrament, because they are said thereby to be *one Bread and one Body*. And the same Apostle in the next Chapter, after he had spoken of the Consecration of the Elements still calls them the *Bread and the Cup*, in three verses together. *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, v. 26. Whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, v. 27. But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup, v. 28.* And our Saviour himself when he had said, *this is my Blood of the New Testament*, immediately adds, **but I say unto you, I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the Vine, until I drink it new with you, in my Father's Kingdom*, that is, not till after his Resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation into the Kingdom given him by his Father, when the Scripture tells us he did eat and drink with his Disciples. But that which I observe from our Saviours Words is, that after the consecration of the Cup, and the delivering of it to his Disciples to drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth drink no more of that Fruit of the Vine, which he had now drank with them, till after his Resurrection. From whence it is plain that it was the Fruit of the Vine, real Wine, which our Saviour drank of, and communicated to his Disciples in the Sacrament.

* Matth.
26. 29.

Besides, if we consider that he celebrated this Sacrament before his Passion, it is impossible these Words should be understood literally of the natural Body and Blood of Christ; because it was *his Body broken* and *his Blood shed* which he gave to his Disciples, which if we understand literally of his natural Body broken

broken and his Blood shed, then these Words, *this is my Body which is broken, and this is my Blood which is shed*, could not be true, because his Body was then whole and unbroken, and his Blood not then shed; nor could it be a *Propitiatory Sacrifice* (as they affirm this Sacrament to be) unless they will say that Propitiation was made before Christ suffer'd: And it is likewise impossible that the Disciples should understand these Words literally, because they not only plainly saw that what he gave them was *Bread and Wine*, but they saw likewise as plainly that it was not his Body which was given, but his Body which gave that which was given; not his Body *broken* and his Blood *shed*, because they saw him alive at that very time, and beheld his Body whole and unpierc'd; and therefore they could not understand these Words literally: If they did, can we imagine that the Disciples, who upon all other occasions were so full of Questions and Objections, should make no difficulty of this matter? nor so much as ask our Saviour, *how* can these things be? that they should not tell him, we see this to be Bread and that to be Wine, and we see thy Body to be distinct from both; we see thy Body not broken, and thy Blood not shed.

From all which it must needs be very evident, to any Man that will impartially consider things, how little reason there is to understand those Words of our Saviour, *this is my Body, and this is my Blood*, in the sense of *Transubstantiation*; nay on the contrary, that there is very great reason and an evident necessity to understand them otherwise. I proceed to shew;

2ly. That this Doctrine is not grounded upon the *perpetual belief of the Christian Church*, which the Church of Rome vainly pretends as an Evidence that the Church did always understand and interpret our Saviour's Words in this Sense.

To manifest the groundlessness of this pretence, I shall, 1. shew by plain testimony of the *Fathers* in several Ages, that this Doctrine was not the Belief of the ancient Christian Church. 2. I shall shew the time and occasion of its coming in, and by what degrees it grew up and was establish'd, in the *Roman Church*. 3. I shall answer their great pretended Demonstration, that this always was and must have been the constant Belief of the Christian Church.

1. I shall shew by plain Testimonies of the *Fathers* in several Ages, for above five hundred years after Christ, that this Doctrine was not the *Belief of the ancient Christian Church*. I deny not but that the *Fathers* do, and that with great reason, very much magnifie the wonderful Mystery and Efficacy of this Sacrament, and frequently speak of a great Supernatural change made by the divine Benediction; which we also readily acknowledge. They say indeed, that the Elements of Bread and Wine do by the divine Blessings become to us the Body and Blood of Christ: But they likewise say that the Names of the things signified are given to the Signs; that the Bread and Wine do still remain in their proper Nature and Substance, and that they are turn'd into the Substance of our Bodies; that the Body of Christ in the Sacrament is not his natural Body, but the Sign and Figure of it; not that Body which was crucified, nor that Blood which was shed upon the Cross; and that it is impious to understand the *eating of the Flesh of the Son of Man* and *drinking his Blood* literally; all which are directly opposite to the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* and utterly inconsistent with it. I will select but some few Testimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpose.

I begin with *Justin Martyr*, who says expressly, that **our Blood and Flesh* *Apol. 2. p. 98. Edit. Paris. 1636. *are nourished by the conversion of that food which we receive in the Eucharist*: But that cannot be the natural Body and Blood of Christ, for no Man will say that that is converted into the nourishment of our Bodies.

The

† Lib. 4.
c. 34.

The Second is † Irenæus, who speaking of this Sacrament says, that the Bread which is from the Earth receiving the divine invocation is now no longer common Bread, but the Eucharist (or Sacrament,) consisting of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly. He says it is no longer Common Bread, but after, Invocation or Consecration it becomes the Sacrament, that is, Bread sanctified, consisting of two things, an earthly and a heavenly; the earthly thing is Bread, and the heavenly is the Divine Blessing which by the Invocation or Consecration is added to it. And * elsewhere he hath this passage, *when therefore the Cup that is mix'd (that is, of Wine and Water) and the Bread that is broken receives the Word of God, it becomes the Eucharist of the Blood and Body of Christ, of which the substance of our Flesh is increased and consists;* but if that which we receive in the Sacrament do nourish our Bodies, it must be Bread and Wine, and not the natural Body and Blood of Christ. There is another remarkable Testimony of Irenæus, which though it be not now extant in those

* Lib. 5.
c. 21.

* Comment.
in 1 Pet.
c. 3.

Works of his which remain, yet hath been preserv'd by * Oecumenius, and it is this when (says he) *the Greeks had taken some Servants of the Christian Catechumeni (that is such as had not been admitted to the Sacrament) and afterwards urged them by violence to tell them some of the secrets of the Christians, these Servants having nothing to say that might gratify those who offered violence to them, except only that they had heard from their Masters that the Divine Communion was the Blood and Body of Christ, they thinking that it was really Blood and Flesh, declar'd as much to those that question'd them. The Greeks taking this as if it were really done by the Christians, discovered it to others of the Greeks; who hereupon put Sanctus and Blandina to the torture to make them confess it. To whom Blandina boldly answer'd, How could they endure to do this, who by way of exercise (or abstinence) do not eat that Flesh which may lawfully be eaten? By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon Christians, as if they had literally eaten the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, was a false Accusation which these Martyrs denied, saying they were so far from that, that they for their part did not eat any Flesh at all*

* Advers.
Marchionem l. 4.
p. 571
Edit. Rigal. Paris.
1634.

† Lib. de
Anima, p.
319.

* Edit.
Huetii.

The next is Tertullian, who proves against Marcion the Heretick, that the Body of our Saviour was not a meer Phantasm and Appearance, but a real Body, because the Sacrament is a Figure and Image of his Body; and if there be an Image of his Body he must have a real Body, otherwise the Sacrament would be an Image of an Image. His Words are these, * *The Bread which our Saviour took and distributed to his Disciples he made his own Body, saying this is my Body, that is, the Image or Figure of my Body. But it could not have been the Figure of his Body, if there had not been a true and real Body.* And arguing against the Scepticks who denied the certainty of sense he useth this Argument: That if we question our Senses we may doubt whether our Blessed Saviour were not deceived in what he heard, and saw, and touched. † *He might (says he) be deceived in the voice from Heaven, in the smell of the Ointment with which he was anointed against his Burial, and in the taste of the Wine which he consecrated in remembrance of his Blood.* So that it seems we are to trust our Senses, even in the matter of the Sacrament: and if that be true, the Doctrine of Transubstantiation is certainly false.

Origen in his * Comment on Matth. 15. speaking of the Sacrament hath this Passage, *That food which is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the Belly and is cast out into the draught, which none surely will say of the Body of Christ. And afterwards he adds by way of explication, it is not the matter of the Bread, but the Words which are spoken over it, which profiteth him that worthily eateth the Lord, and this (he says) he had spoken concerning the Typical and Symbolical Body.* So that the matter of Bread remaineth

remaineth in the Sacrament, and this *Origen* calls the *Typical* and *Symbolical* Body of Christ; and it is not the natural Body of Christ which is there eaten; for the food eaten in the Sacrament, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the Belly and is cast out into the draught. This Testimony is so very plain in the Cause that *Sextus Senensis* suspects this place of *Origen* was depraved by the Hereticks. *Cardinal Perron* is contented to allow it to be *Origen's*, but rejects his Testimony because he was accused of Heresie by some of the Fathers, and says he talks like a Heretick in this place. So that with much ado this Testimony is yielded to us. The same *Father* in his ** Homi- * Cap. 10.* lies upon *Leviticus* speaks thus, *There is also in the new Testament a letter which kills him who doth not spiritually understand those things which are said; for if we take according to the Letter that which is said, EXCEPT YE EAT MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this Letter kills.* And this also is a killing Testimony, and not to be answerd but in *Cardinal Perron's* way by saying he talks like a Heretick.

St. Cyprian hath a whole *Epistle * to Cecilius*, against those who gave the ** Ep. 63.* Communion in Water only without Wine mingled with it; and his main Argument against them is this, that *the Blood of Christ with which we are redeemed and quickned cannot seem to be in the Cup when there is no Wine in the Cup by which the Blood of Christ is represented:* and afterwards he says that contrary to the *Evangelical and Apostolical Doctrine*, *Water was in some Places offer'd (or given) in the Lord's Cup, which (says he) alone cannot express (or represent) the Blood of Christ.* And lastly he tells us, that *by Water* the People is understood, *by Wine the Blood of Christ is shewn (or represented) but when in the Cup Water is mingled with Wine the People is united to Christ.* So that according to this Argument *Wine* in the Sacramental Cup is no otherwise changed into the *Blood of Christ* than the *Water* mixed with it is changed into the People which are said to be united to Christ.

I omit many others, and pass to *St. Austin* in the *fourth Age* after Christ. And I the rather insist upon his Testimony, because of his eminent esteem and authority in the *Latin Church*; and he also calls the *Elements* of the Sacrament the *Figure and Sign of Christ's Body and Blood*. In his Book against *Adamantus* the *Manichee* we have this Expression. *Our Lord did not doubt * Aug.* to say, *this is my Body when he gave the sign of his Body. * And in his expli- Tom. 6. p. 187. Edit. Basil.* cation of the third *Psal*m, speaking of *Judas* whom our Lord admitted to his last Supper, *in which (says he) † he commended and delivered to his Dis- 1596. † Enarrat. in Psal. Tom. 8. p. 16.* ciples the figure of his Body; Language which would now be censured for Heresie in the Church of *Rome*. Indeed he was never accus'd of Heresie, as *Cardinal Perron* says *Origen* was, but he talks as like one as *Origen* himself. And in his Comment on the 98th *Psal*m, speaking of the Offence which the Disciples took at that saying of our Saviour, *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, &c.* he brings in our Saviour speaking thus to them, *† Ye must understand spiritually, what I have said unto you; ye are not † Id. Tom. 9. p. 1105.* to eat this Body which ye see, and to drink that Blood which shall be shed by those that shall crucifie me. I have commended a certain Sacrament to you, which being spiritually understood will give you Life. What more opposite to the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, than that the Disciples were not to eat that Body of Christ which they saw, nor to drink that Blood which was shed upon the Cross, but that all this was to be understood spiritually and according to the nature of a Sacrament? for *that Body* he tells us is not here but in Heaven, in his Comment upon these Words, *Me ye have not always. * He * Id. Tract. 50. in Jo: an.* speaks (says he) of the Presence of his Body: ye shall have me according to my providence according to Majesty and invisible Grace: but according to the flesh which the

the Word assumed, according to that which was born of the Virgin Mary, ye shall not have me: therefore because he conversed with his Disciples forty days, he is ascended up into Heaven, and is not here.

In his 23^d Epistle; † If the Sacrament (says he) had not some resemblance of those things whereof they are Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all: but from this resemblance they take for the most part the names of the things which they represent. Therefore as the Sacrament of the Body of Christ is in some manner or sense Christ's Body and the Sacrament of his Blood is the Blood of Christ; So the Sacrament of Faith (meaning Baptism) is faith. Upon which Words of St. Austin there is this remarkable Gloss in their own Canon-Law: * The heavenly Sacrament which truly represents the flesh of Christ is called the Body of Christ; but improperly: whence it is said, that after a manner, but not according to the truth of the thing, but the Mystery of the thing, signified; So that the meaning is, it is called the Body of Christ, that is, it signifies the Body Christ: And if this be St. Austin's meaning, I am sure no Protestant can speak more plainly against Transubstantiation. And in the ancient Canon of the Mass, before it was chang'd in compliance with this new Doctrine, it is expressly call'd a Sacrament, a Sign, an Image, and a Figure of Christ's Body. To which I will add that remarkable passage of St. Austin cited by * Gratian, That as we receive the similitude of his Death in Baptism, so we may also receive the likeness of his Flesh and Blood, that so neither may truth be wanting in the Sacrament, nor Pagans have occasion to make us ridiculous for drinking the Blood of one that was slain.

I will mention but one Testimony more of this Father, but so clear a one as it is impossible any Man in his wits that had believed Transubstantiation could have utter'd. It is in his Treatise * de doctrina Christiana; where laying down several Rules for the right understanding of Scripture, he gives this for one. If (says he) the speech be a Precept forbidding some heinous Wickedness or Crime, or commanding us to do good, it is not figurative; but if it seem to command any heinous Wickedness or Crime, or to forbid that which is profitable and beneficial to others, it is figurative. For example, Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you: This seems to command a heinous Wickedness and Crime, therefore it is a figure; commanding us to communicate of the passion of our Lord, and with delight and advantage to lay up in our memory that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us. So that, according to St. Austin's best skill in interpreting Scripture, the literal eating of the Flesh of Christ and drinking his Blood would have been a great Impiety; and therefore the Expression is to be understood figuratively; not as Cardinal Perron would have it, only in opposition to the eating of his Flesh and Blood in the gross appearance of Flesh and Blood, but to the real eating of his natural Body and Blood under any appearance whatsoever: For St. Austin doth not say, this is a Figurative Speech wherein we are commanded really to feed upon the natural Body and Blood of Christ under the species of Bread and Wine, as the Cardinal would understand him; for then the Speech would be literal and not figurative: But he says, this is a figurative Speech wherein we are commanded spiritually to feed upon the remembrance of his Passion.

To these I will add but three or four Testimonies more in the two following Ages.

The first shall be of Theodoret, who speaking of that * Prophecy of Jacob concerning our Saviour, he washed his Garments in Wine, and his Clothes in the Blood of grapes, hath these Words, † as we call the mystical fruit of the Vine (that is, the Wine in the Sacrament) after consecration the Blood of the Lord, so he (viz. Jacob) calls the Blood of the true Vine (viz. of Christ) the Blood of

† Id. Tom.
2. P. 93.

* De Con-
secrat. dist.
2. Hoc est.

* De Con-
secrat. dist.
2. Scilicet
Utrum.

* Lib. 3.
Tom. 3. P.
53.

* Gen. 49.
11.

† Dialog. 1.

of the Grape : but the Blood of Christ is not literally and properly but only figuratively the Blood of the Grape, in the same sense as he is said to be the true Vine ; and therefore the Wine in the Sacrament after Consecration is in like manner not literally and properly but figuratively the Blood of Christ. And he explains this afterwards, saying, that *our Saviour changed the names, and gave to his Body the name of the Symbol or Sign, and to the Symbol or Sign the name of his Body ; thus when he had call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Symbol or Sign his Blood ; so that in the same sense that he call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Wine, which is the Symbol of his Blood, his Blood : For, says he, he would have those who partake of the Divine Mysteries not to attend to the nature of the things which are seen, but by the change of names to believe the change which is made by Grace ; for he who call'd that which by nature is a Body, Wheat and Bread, and again likewise call'd himself the Vine, he honour'd the Symbols with the name of his Body and Blood : not changing Nature, but adding Grace to Nature.* Where you see he says expressly, that when he call'd the Symbols or Elements of the Sacrament, viz. Bread and Wine his Body and Blood, he made no change in the Nature of the things, only added Grace to Nature, that is, by the Divine Grace and Blessing he rais'd them to a spiritual and supernatural virtue and efficacy.

The Second is of the same *Theodoret*, in his second Dialogue between a *Catholique* under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and an *Heretique* under the name of *Eranistes* ; who maintaining that the Humanity of Christ was chang'd into the Substance of the Divinity (which was the Heresy of *Eutyches*) he illustrates the matter by this Similitude. As, says he, *the Symbols of the Lord's Body and Blood are one thing before the Invocation of the Priest, but after the Invocation are changed and become another thing ; so the Body of our Lord after his Ascension is changed into the Divine Substance.* But what says the *Catholique Orthodoxus* to this ? why, he talks just like one of Cardinal Perron's *Heretiques* : *Thou art, says he, caught in thy own Net ; because the mystical Symbols after Consecration do not pass out of their own nature : for they remain in their former substance, figure and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before.* He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the Symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and substance of them, even in the proper and strictest sense of the word Substance ; and it was necessary so to do, otherwise he had not given a pertinent Answer to the Similitude urg'd against him.

The next is one of their own Popes, *Gelasius*, who brings the same instance against the *Eutychians* ; * *Surely, says he, the Sacraments which we receive of the Body and Blood of our Lord are a Divine Thing, so that by them we are made Partakers of a Divine Nature, and yet it ceaseth not to be the substance or nature of Bread and Wine ; and certainly the image and resemblance of Christ's Body and Blood are celebrated in the action of the Mysteries, that is, in the Sacrament.* To make this Instance of any force against the *Eutychians*, who held that the Body of Christ upon his Ascension ceas'd, and was chang'd into the substance of his Divinity, it was necessary to deny that there was any substantial change in the Sacrament of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. So that here is an infallible Authority, one of their own Popes expressly against *Transubstantiation*.

The last Testimony I shall produce is of *Facundus* an *African Bishop*, who lived in the 6th Century. Upon occasion of justifying an Expression of one who had said that *Christ also received the Adoption of Sons*, he reasons thus.

† *Christ vouchsafed to receive the Sacrament of Adoption both when he was circum-* † *Facundus*
cised and baptised : *And the Sacrament of Adoption may be called Adoption, as the* P. 144 edit.
Par. 1676.

Sacrament of his body and blood, which is in the consecrated bread and cup, is by us called his body and blood: not that the bread, says he, is properly his body and the cup his blood, but because they contain in them the mysteries of his body and blood; hence our Lord himself called the blessed bread and cup which he gave to his Disciples his body and blood. Can any man after this, believe that it was then, and had ever been, the universal and received Doctrine of the Christian Church, that the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament are substantially changed into the proper and natural Body and Blood of Christ?

By these plain Testimonies which I have produced, and I might have brought a great many more to the same purpose, it is I think evident beyond all denial that *Transubstantiation* has not been the perpetual belief of the Christian Church. And this likewise is acknowledg'd by many great and learned Men

(a) *In sent. l. 4. dist. 11. Q. 3.* of the Roman Church. (a) *Scotus* acknowledgeth that this Doctrine was not always thought necessary to be believed, but that the necessity of believing it was consequent to that Declaration of the Church made in the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the III. And (b) *Durandus* freely discovers his inclination to have believed the contrary, if the Church had not by that determination obliged men to believe it, (c) *Tonstal* Bishop of *Durham* also yields that before the *Lateran* Council men were at liberty as to the manner of Christ's presence in the Sacrament. And (d) *Erasmus*, who lived and died in the Communion of the Roman Church, and than whom no man was better read in the ancient Fathers, doth confess that it was late before the Church defined *Transubstantiation*, unknown to the Ancients both Name and Thing. And (e) *Alphonfus a Castro* says plainly, that concerning the *Transubstantiation* of the bread into the body of Christ, there is seldom any mention in the ancient Writers. And who can imagine that these learned Men would have granted the ancient Church and Fathers to have been so much Strangers to this Doctrine, had they thought it to have been the perpetual Belief of the Church? I shall now in the

Second place, give an account of the particular time and occasion of the coming in of this Doctrine, and by what steps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an Article of Faith in the Romish Church. The Doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ was first started upon occasion of the Dispute about the Worship of Images, in opposition whereto the Synod of Constantinople about the year DCCL did argue thus, That our Lord having left us no other Image of himself but the Sacrament, in which the substance of Bread is the Image of his Body, we ought to make no other Image of our Lord. In answer to this Argument the second Council of Nice, in the year DCCLXXXVII did declare, that the Sacrament after Consecration is not the Image and Anti-type of Christ's Body and Blood, but is properly his Body and Blood. So that the corporeal presence of the body of Christ in the Sacrament was first brought in to support the stupid Worship of Images: And indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occasion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpose.

* De Euchar. l. 1. c. 1.

And here I cannot but take notice how well this agrees with * *Bellarmino's* Observation, that none of the Ancients who wrote of Heresies, hath put this Error (viz. of denying *Transubstantiation*) in his Catalogue; nor did any of the Ancients dispute against this Error for the first 600 years. Which is very true, because there could be no occasion then to dispute against those who denied *Transubstantiation*, since, as I have shewn, this Doctrine was not in being, unless among the *Eutychian* Heretiques, for the first 600 years and more. But † *Bellarmino* goes on and tells us, that the first who call'd in question the truth of the Body of the Lord in the Eucharist were the *ICONOMACHI* (the opposers

† Ibid.

posers of Images) after the year DCC in the Council of Constantinople; for these said there was one Image of Christ instituted by Christ himself, viz. the Bread and Wine in the Eucharist, which represents the Body and Blood of Christ: Wherefore from that time the Greek Writers often admonish us that the Eucharist is not the Figure or Image of the Body of the Lord, but his true Body, as appears from the VII. Synod; which agrees most exactly with the account which I have given of the first rise of this Doctrine, which began with the corporeal Presence of Christ in the Sacrament, and afterwards proceeded to Transubstantiation.

And as this was the first occasion of introducing this Doctrine among the Greeks, so in the Latin or Roman Church Paschasius Radbertus, first a Monk, and afterwards Abbot of Corbey, was the first Broacher of it in the year DCCCXVIII.

And for this, besides the evidence of History, we have the acknowledgment of two very eminent Persons in the Church of Rome, Bellarmine and Sirmondus, who do in effect confess that this Paschasius was the first who wrote to purpose upon this Argument. * Bellarmine in these words, *This* * De Scri. ptor. Eccl. Author was the first who hath seriously and copiously written concerning the truth of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist: And † Sirmondus in these, *He so first* † In vita Paschasii. explained the genuine sense of the Catholick Church, that he opened the way to the rest who afterwards in great numbers wrote upon the same Argument: But though Sirmondus is pleased to say that he only first explained the sense of the Catholick Church in this point, yet it is very plain from the Records of that Age which are left to us, that this was the first time that this Doctrine was broached in the Latin Church; and it met with great opposition in that Age, as I shall have occasion hereafter to shew. For Rabanus Maurus Archbishop of Mentz, about the year DCCCXLVII. reciting the very words of Paschasius wherein he had delivered this Doctrine, hath this remarkable passage concerning the novelty of it; * Some, says he, of late not having a * Epist. ad Heribaldum, c. 33. right opinion concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, have said that this is the Body and Blood of our Lord, which was born of the Virgin Mary, and in which our Lord suffer'd upon the Cross and rose from the dead: which error, says he, we have opposed with all our might. From whence it is plain, by the Testimony of one of the greatest and most learned Bishops of that Age, and of eminent reputation for Piety, that what is now the very Doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the Sacrament was then esteem'd an Error broach'd by some particular Persons, but was far from being the generally receiv'd Doctrine of that Age. Can any one think it possible that so eminent a Person in the Church both for Piety and Learning could have condemn'd this Doctrine as an Error and a Novelty, had it been the general Doctrine of the Christian Church, not only in that but in all former Ages: and no Censure pass'd upon him for that which is now the great burning Article in the Church of Rome, and esteem'd by them one of the greatest and most pernicious Heresies?

Afterwards in the year MLIX, when Berengarius in France and Germany had rais'd a fresh Opposition against this Doctrine, he was compell'd to recant it by Pope Nicholas and the Council at Rome, in these words, * That * Gratian. de Consecrat. distinct. 2. Lanfranc. de corp. & sang. Domini, c. 5. Guil. mun. de Sacram. Algar. de Sacram. l. 1. c. 19. † Gloss. De consecrat. dist. 2. in cap. Ego Berengarius. the Bread and Wine which are set upon the Altar, after the Consecration are not only the Sacrament, but the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; and are sensibly, not only in the Sacrament, but in truth, handled and broken by the hands of the Priest, and ground or bruised by the Teeth of the Faithful. But it seems the Pope and his Council were not then skilful enough to express themselves rightly in this matter; for the Gloss upon the Canon Law says expressly, † That unless we understand these words of BERENGARIUS (that is in truth

truth of the Pope and his Council) in a sound sense, we shall fall into a greater Heresy than that of BERENGARIUS: for we do not make parts of the Body of Christ. The meaning of which Gloss I cannot imagine, unless it be this, That the Body of Christ, though it be in truth broken, yet it is not broken into parts, (for we do not make parts of the Body of Christ) but into wholes: Now this new way of breaking a Body, not into parts but into wholes, (which in good earnest is the Doctrine of the Church of Rome) though to them that are able to believe Transubstantiation it may for any-thing I know appear to be sound sense, yet to us that cannot believe so, it appears to be solid nonsense.

About XX years after, in the year MLXXIX Pope Gregory the VIIth began to be sensible of this absurdity; and therefore in another Council at Rome made Berengarius to recant in another Form, viz. * That the Bread and Wine which are placed upon the Altar, are substantially changed into the true and proper and quickning Flesh and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and after Consecration are the true Body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, and which being offered for the Salvation of the World did hang upon the Cross, and sits at the right hand of the Father.

* Wal-
denf. To
I. c. 13.

So that from the first starting of this Doctrine in the second Council of Nice in the year DCCLXXXVII, till the Council under Pope Gregory the VIIth in the year MLXXIX, it was almost three hundred years that this Doctrine was contested, and before this mishapen Monster of Transubstantiation could be lick'd into that form in which it is now settled and establish'd in the Church of Rome. Here then is a plain account of the first rise of this Doctrine, and of the several steps whereby it was advanced by the Church of Rome into an Article of Faith. I come now in the

Third place, to answer the great pretended Demonstration of the impossibility that this Doctrine, if it had been new, should ever have come in in any Age, and been received in the Church: and consequently it must of necessity have been the perpetual Belief of the Church in all Ages: For if it had not always been the Doctrine of the Church, whenever it had attempted first to come in there would have been a great stir and bustle about it, and the whole Christian World would have rose up in opposition to it. But we can shew no such time when it first came in, and when any such opposition was made to it, and therefore it was always the Doctrine of the Church. This Demonstration Monsieur Arnauld, a very learned Man in France, pretends to be unanswerable: whether it be so or not I shall briefly examine. And,

First, We do assign a punctual and very likely time of the first rise of this Doctrine, about the beginning of the ninth Age; though it did not take firm root, nor was fully settled and establish'd till towards the end of the eleventh. And this was the most likely time of all other, from the beginning of Christianity, for so gross an Error to appear; it being, by the confession and consent of their own Historians, the most dark and dismal time that ever happened to the Christian Church, both for Ignorance and Superstition and Vice. It came in together with Idolatry, and was made use of to support it: A fit Prop and Companion for it. And indeed what Tares might not the Enemy have sown in so dark and long a Night; when so considerable a part of the Christian World was lull'd asleep in profound Ignorance and Superstition? And this agrees very well with the account which our Saviour himself gives in the Parable of the Tares, of the springing up of Errors and Corruptions in the Field of the Church. * While the Men slept the Enemy did his Work in the Night, so that when they were awake they wondered how and whence the Tares came; but being sure they were

* Matth.
13. 24.

were there, and that they were not sown at first, they concluded *the Enemy had done it.*

Secondly, I have shewn likewise that there was *considerable opposition* made to this *Error* at its first coming in. The general Ignorance and gross Superstition of that Age rendred the generality of People more quiet and secure, and disposed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of Mystery in Religion, and of greater Reverence and Devotion to the Sacrament, and that seemed any way to countenance the Worship of *Images*, for which at that time they were zealously concern'd. But notwithstanding the security and passive Temper of the People, the Men most eminent for Piety and Learning in that Time made great resistance against it. I have already named *Rabanus* Archbishop of *Mentz*, who opposed it as an Error lately sprung up, and which had then gain'd but upon some few Persons. To whom I may add *Heribaldus* Bishop of *Auxerres* in *France*, *Jo. Scotus*, *Erigena*, and *Ratramus*, commonly known by the name of *Bertram*, who at the same time were employed by the Emperour *Charles the Bald* to oppose this growing Error, and wrote learnedly against it. And these were the eminent Men for Learning in that time. And because Monsieur *Arnauld* will not be satisfied unless there were some stir and bustle about it, *Bertram* in his *Preface* to his Book tells us, that they *who according to their several opinions talked differently about the mystery of Christ's body and blood were divided by no small Schism.*

Thirdly, Though for a more clear and satisfactory Answer to this pretended *Demonstration* I have been contented to untie this Knot, yet I could without all these pains have cut it. For suppose this Doctrine had silently come in and without opposition, so that we could not assign the particular time and occasion of its first Rise; yet if it be evident from the Records of former Ages for above D. years together, that this was not the ancient Belief of the Church; and plain also, that this Doctrine was afterwards received in the *Roman Church*, though we could not tell how and when it came in, yet it would be the wildest and most extravagant thing in the world to set up a pretended *Demonstration* of Reason against plain Experience and Matter of fact. This is just *Zeno's* *Demonstration* of the impossibility of Motion against *Diogenes* walking before his eyes. For this is to undertake to prove that impossible to have been, which most certainly was. Just thus the *Servants* in the *Parable* might have demonstrated that the *Tares* were *Wheat*, because they were sure none but good Seed was sown at first, and no man could give any account of the punctual time when any *Tares* were sown, or by whom: and if an Enemy had come to do it, he must needs have met with great Resistance and Opposition; but no such Resistance was made, and therefore there could be no *Tares* in the *Field*, but that which they call'd *Tares* was certainly good *Wheat*. At the same rate a Man might demonstrate that *our King*, his *Majesty of Great-Britain*, is not return'd into *England*, nor restor'd to his Crown; because there being so great and powerful an Army possess'd of his Lands, and therefore obliged by interest to keep him out, it was impossible he should ever come in without a great deal of Fighting and Bloodshed: but there was no such thing, therefore he is not return'd and restor'd to his Crown. And by the like kind of *Demonstration* one might prove that the *Turk* did not invade *Christendom* last year, and besiege *Vienna*; because if he had, the *Most Christian King*, who had the greatest Army in *Christendom* in a readiness, would certainly have employed it against him; but Monsieur *Arnauld* certainly knows no such thing was done: And therefore according to his way of *Demonstration*,
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the matter of fact, so commonly reported and believed, concerning the *Turks Invasion of Christendom* and *besieging Vienna* last year, was a perfect Mistake. But a Man may demonstrate till his Head and Heart ache, before he shall ever be able to prove that which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For of all sorts of Impossibles nothing is more evidently so, than to make that which hath been not to have been. All the reason in the world is too weak to cope with so tough and obstinate a difficulty. And I have often wonder'd how a Man of Monsieur *Arnauld's* great Wit and sharp Judgment could prevail with himself to engage in so bad and baffled a Cause; or could think to defend it with so *wooden a Dagger* as his *Demonstration of Reason* against certain *Experience* and *Matter of fact*: A thing, if it be possible, of equal absurdity with what he pretends to demonstrate, *Transubstantiation* it-self. I proceed to the

Third pretended Ground of this Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; and that is, *The infallible Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith*. And this in truth is the Ground into which the most of the learned Men of their Church did heretofore, and many do still resolve their belief of this Doctrine: And, as I have already shewn, do plainly say that they see no sufficient reason, either from *Scripture* or *Tradition*, for the belief of it: And that they should have believed the contrary had not the determination of the Church obliged them otherwise.

But if this Doctrine be obtruded upon the world merely by virtue of the Authority of the *Roman Church*, and the Declaration of the *Council* under Pope *Gregory the VIIth.* or of the *Lateran Council* under *Innocent the IIIrd.* then it is a plain Innovation in the Christian Doctrine, and a new Article of Faith impos'd upon the Christian World. And if any Church hath this power, the Christian Faith may be enlarged and changed as often as Men please; and that which is no part of our Saviour's Doctrine, nay, any-thing, tho' never so absurd and unreasonable, may become an Article of Faith, obliging all Christians to the belief of it, whenever the Church of *Rome* shall think fit to stamp her Authority upon it: which would make Christianity a most uncertain and endless thing.

The *Fourth* pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *the necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of those who receive it*. But there is no colour for this if the thing be rightly consider'd: Because the Comfort and Benefit of the Sacrament depend upon the Blessing annexed to the Institution. And as *Water* in *Baptism*, without any substantial change made in that Element, may by the Divine Blessing accompanying the Institution be effectual to the washing away of Sin, and spiritual Regeneration; So there can no reason in the world be given why the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Lord's-Supper* may not, by the same Divine Blessing accompanying this Institution, make the worthy Receivers Partakers of all the spiritual Comfort and Benefit designed to us thereby without any substantial Change made in those Elements, since our Lord hath told us, that *verily the flesh profiteth nothing*. So that if we could do so odd and strange a thing as to eat the very natural Flesh and drink the Blood of our Lord, I do not see of what greater advantage it would be to us than what we may have by partaking of the Symbols of his Body and Blood as he hath appointed *in remembrance of him*. For the spiritual efficacy of the Sacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, supposing we receive what our Lord appointed, and receive it with a right Preparation and Disposition of Mind, but upon the supernatural Blessing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to those spiritual Ends for which it was appointed.

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The *Fifth* and last pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *to magnify the power of the Priest in being able to work so great a Miracle*. And this with great Pride and Pomp is often urg'd by them as a transcendent instance of the Divine Wisdom, to find out so admirable a way to raise the Power and Reverence of the Priest; that he should be able every day, and as often as he pleases, by repeating a few words to work so miraculous a change, and (as they love most absurdly and blasphemously to speak) *to make God himself*.

But this is to pretend to a power above that of God himself, for he did not, nor cannot make himself, nor do any thing that implies a contradiction, as *Transubstantiation* evidently does in their pretending *to make God*. For to make that which already is, and make that *now* which *always* was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done, but impossible because it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all *Transubstantiation*, if it were possible and actually wrought by the Priest, would yet be no Miracle; For there are two things necessary to a Miracle, that there be a supernatural Effect wrought, and that this Effect be evident to Sense. So that tho' a supernatural Effect be wrought, yet if it be not evident to Sense, it is to all the ends and purposes of a Miracle as if it were not; and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because it-self stands in need of another Miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And neither in Scripture, nor in profane Authors, nor in common use of Speech, is any-thing call'd a Miracle but what falls under the notice of our Senses: A *Miracle* being nothing else but a *supernatural Effect evident to Sense*, the great end and design whereof is to be a sensible Proof and Conviction to us of something that we do not see.

And for want of this condition, *Transubstantiation*, if it were true, would be no Miracle. It would indeed be very *supernatural*, but for all that it would not be a *Sign* or *Miracle*: For a Sign or Miracle is always a thing sensible, otherwise it could be no Sign. Now that such a change as is pretended in *Transubstantiation*, should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to sense; for our Senses perceive no change, the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament to all our Senses remaining just as they were before: And that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it; we wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done, but no Man wonders when he sees nothing done. So that *Transubstantiation*, if they will needs have it a Miracle, is such a Miracle as any Man may work that hath but the confidence to face Men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed: And though the Church of *Rome* may magnifie their Priests upon account of this Miracle which they say they can work every day and every hour, yet I cannot understand the reason of it; for when this great Work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done than if there were no Miracle: Now such a Miracle as to all appearance is no Miracle, I see no reason why a Protestant Minister, as well as a Popish Priest, may not work as often as he pleases; or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work it-self. For surely nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it to make it just what it was before. Every man, every day, may work ten thousand such Miracles.

And thus I have dispatch'd the first part of my Discourse, which was to consider the pretended Grounds and *Reasons* of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine, and to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them. I come in the

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II. SECOND place, to produce our *Objections* against it. Which will be of so much the greater force, because I have already shewn this Doctrine to be destitute of all Divine Warrant and Authority, and of any other sort of ground sufficient in reason to justify it. So that I do not now object against a Doctrine which has a fair probability of Divine Revelation on its side, for that would weigh down all Objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its Divine Revelation: But I object against a Doctrine by the mere Will and Tyranny of Men impos'd upon the belief of Christians, without any evidence of *Scripture*, and against all the evidence of *Reason* and *Sense*.

The Objections I shall reduce to these two Heads. *First*, The infinite Scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion. And *Secondly*, The monstrous and insupportable Absurdity of it.

First, The infinite Scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion. And that upon these four accounts: 1. Of the Stupidity of this Doctrine. 2. The real Barbarousness of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion upon supposition of the truth of this Doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody Consequences of it. 4. Of the Danger of Idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this Doctrine be not true. 1. Upon account of the Stupidity of this Doctrine. I remember that *Tully*, who was a Man of very good sense, instanceth in the Conceit of *eating God* as the extremity of Madness, and so stupid an apprehension as he thought no man was ever guilty of. **When we call*, says he, *the fruits of the earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we use but the common language; but do you think any man so mad as to believe that which he eats to be God?* It seems he could not believe that so extravagant a Folly had ever entred into the Mind of Man. It is a very severe Saying of *Averroes* the Arabian Philosopher (who lived after this Doctrine was entertained among Christians) and ought to make the Church of *Rome* blush, if she can; *I have travell'd*, says he†, *over the World, and have found divers Sects; but so sottish a Sect or Law I never found, as is the Sect of the Christians; because with their own Teeth they devour their God whom they worship.* It was great Stupidity in the People of *Israel* to say, *Come let us make us Gods*; but it was civilly said of them, *Let us make us Gods that may go before us*, in comparison of the Church of *Rome*, who say, *Let us make a God that we may eat him.* So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they should chuse thus to expose Faith to the contempt of all that are endued with Reason. And to speak the plain truth, the Christian Religion was never so horribly exposed to the Scorn of Atheists and Infidels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless Doctrine. But thus it was foretold that || *the Man of Sin* should come with power and signs and lying miracles, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, with all the Legerdemain and juggling Tricks of Falshood and Imposture; amongst which this of *Transubstantiation*, which they call a *Miracle*, and we a *Cheat*, is one of the chief: And in all probability those common juggling words of *Hocus-pocus*, are nothing else but a corruption of *Hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the Priests of the Church of *Rome* in their Trick of *Transubstantiation*. Into such Contempt by this foolish Doctrine and pretended Miracle of theirs have they brought the most sacred and venerable Mystery of our Religion.

2. It is very scandalous likewise upon account of the real Barbarousness of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion, upon supposition of the truth of this Doctrine. Literally to eat the flesh of the Son of man and to drink his blood, *St. Austin*, as I have shewed before, declares to be a great Impiety. And the

* De Nat. Deorum, l. 3.

† Dionys. Carthus. in 4. dist. 10. art. 1.

|| 2 Theff. 2. 10.

the impiety and barbarousness of the thing is not in truth extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its being done under the *Species of Bread and Wine*: For the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they believe that they verily eat and drink the natural Flesh and Blood of Christ. And what can any Man do more unworthily towards his Friend? How can he possibly use him more barbarously, than to feast upon his living Flesh and Blood? It is one of the greatest wonders in the World, that it should ever enter into the minds of Men to put upon our Saviour's Words, so easily capable of a more convenient Sense, and so necessarily requiring it, a meaning so plainly contrary to Reason and Sense, and even to Humanity it-self. Had the ancient Christians owned any such Doctrine, we should have heard it from the Adversaries of our Religion in every page of their Writings; and they would have desired no greater advantage against the Christians than to have been able to hit them in the Teeth with their feasting upon the natural Flesh and Blood of their Lord, and their God, and their best Friend. What endless Triumphs would they have made upon this Subject? And with what confidence would they have set the Cruelty used by Christians in their *Sacrament*, against their God *Saturn's* eating his own Children, and all the cruel and bloody Rites of their Idolatry? But that no such thing was then objected by the *Heathens* to the *Christians*, is to a Wise Man instead of a thousand Demonstrations that no such Doctrine was then believed.

3. It is scandalous also upon account of the *cruel and bloody consequences* of this Doctrine; so contrary to the plain Laws of Christianity, and to one great end and design of this Sacrament, which is to unite Christians in the most perfect Love and Charity to one another: Whereas this Doctrine hath been the occasion of the most barbarous and bloody Tragedies that ever were acted in the World. For this hath been in the Church of *Rome* the great *burning Article*: and as absurd and unreasonable as it is, more Christians have been murdered for the denial of it than perhaps for all the other Articles of their Religion. And I think it may generally pass for a true observation, That all Sects are commonly most hot and furious for those things for which there is least Reason; for what Men want of Reason for their Opinions, they usually supply and make up in Rage. And it was no more than needed to use this severity upon this occasion; for nothing but the cruel Fear of Death could in probability have driven so great a part of Mankind into the acknowledgment of so unreasonable and senseless a Doctrine.

O Blessed Saviour! thou best Friend and greatest Lover of Mankind, who can imagine thou didst ever intend that Men should kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their Senses; for being unwilling to think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main Duty and principal Mystery of thy Religion; for not flattering the Pride and Presumption of the Priest who says he can make God, and for not complying with the folly and stupidity of the People who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of *Idolatry*; which they are certainly guilty of if this Doctrine be not true, and such a change as they pretend be not made in the Sacrament; for if it be not, then they worship a Creature instead of the Creator God blessed for ever. But such a change I have shewn to be impossible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and consequently are always in danger of Idolatry; and that they can never be certain that such a change is made, is evident; because according to the express determination of the Council of *Trent*, that depends

pend upon the mind and *intention of the Priest*, which cannot certainly be known but by Revelation, which is not pretended in this case. And if they be mistaken in this change, through the knavery or crossness of the Priest who will not *make God* but when he thinks fit, they must not think to excuse themselves from Idolatry because they intended to worship God and not a Creature; for so the *Persians* might be excus'd from Idolatry in worshipping the *Sun*, because they intend to worship God and not a Creature; and so indeed we may excuse all the Idolatry that ever was in the World, which is nothing else but a mistake of the Deity, and upon that mistake a worshipping of something as God which is not God.

II. Besides the infinite scandal of this Doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, *the monstrous absurdities* of it make it insupportable to any Religion. I am very well assur'd of the grounds of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular; and yet I cannot see that the foundations of any revealed Religion, are strong enough to bear the weight of so many and so great absurdities as this Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* would load it withal. And to make this Evident, I shall not insist upon those gross Contradictions, of the same Body being in so many several Places at once; of our Saviour's giving away himself with his own hands to every one of his Disciples, and yet still keeping himself to himself; and a thousand more of the like nature: but to shew the absurdity of this Doctrine, I shall only ask these few Questions.

1. Whether any Man have, or ever had greater evidence of the truth of any Divine Revelation than every Man hath of the falshood of *Transubstantiation*? Infidelity were hardly possible to Men, if all Men had the same evidence for the Christian Religion which they have against *Transubstantiation*, that is, the clear and irresistible Evidence of Sense. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his senses, is at an end of certainty; for what can a Man be certain of if he be not certain of what he sees? In some circumstances our senses may deceive us, but no Faculty deceives us so little and so seldom: And when our senses do deceive us, even that error is not to be corrected without the help of our senses.

2. Supposing this Doctrine had been delivered in Scripture in the very same Words that it is decreed in the Council of *Trent*, by what clearer evidence or stronger Argument could any Man prove to me that such Words were in the Bible, than I can prove to him that Bread and Wine after consecration are Bread and Wine still? He could but appeal to my Eyes to prove such Words to be in the Bible, and with the same Reason and Justice might I appeal to several of his Senses to prove to him that the Bread and Wine after Consecration are Bread and Wine still.

3. Whether it be reasonable to imagine that God should make that a part of the Christian Religion which shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the Miracles which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, the assurance whereof did at first depend upon the certainty of sense. For if the senses of those who say they saw them were deceived, then there might be no Miracles wrought: and consequently it may justly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which God hath given to the Christian Religion would be strong enough to prove it, supposing *Transubstantiation* to be a part of it: Because every Man hath as great evidence that *Transubstantiation* is false, as he hath that the Christian Religion is true. Suppose then *Transubstantiation* to be part of the Christian Doctrine,

it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is Miracles: But of all Doctrines in the World it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which any Man hath of the truth of the Miracle he hath of the falshood of the Doctrine, that is, the clear Evidence of his Senses. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not Bread but the Body of Christ*, there is only the Evidence of sense; and there is the very same Evidence to prove *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not the Body of Christ but Bread*. So that here would arise a new Controversie, whether a Man should rather believe his Senses giving testimony against the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or bearing witness to a Miracle wrought to confirm that Doctrine; there being the very same Evidence against the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle: And then the Argument for *Transubstantiation* and the Objection against it would just balance one another; and consequently *Transubstantiation* is not to be proved by a Miracle, because that would be, *to prove to a Man by something that he sees, that he doth not see what he sees*. And if there were no other Evidence that *Transubstantiation* is no part of the Christian Doctrine, this would be sufficient, that what proves the one, doth as much overthrow the other; and that Miracles which are certainly the best and highest external proof of Christianity, are the worst proof in the World of *Transubstantiation*, unless a Man can renounce his senses at the same time that he relies upon them. For a Man cannot believe a Miracle without relying upon sense, nor *Transubstantiation* without renouncing it. So that never were any two things so ill coupled together as the Doctrine of Christianity and that of *Transubstantiation*, because they draw several ways, and are ready to strangle one another: For the main Evidence of the Christian Doctrine, which is Miracles, is resolved into the certainty of sense, but this Evidence is clear and point-blank against *Transubstantiation*.

4. And *Lastly*, I would ask what we are to think of the Argument which our Saviour used to convince his Disciples after his Resurrection that his Body was really risen, and that they were not deluded by a Ghost or Apparition? Is it a necessary and conclusive Argument or not? † *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled; and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self; for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as you see me have.* But now if we suppose with the Church of Rome the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* to be true, and that he had instructed his Disciples in it just before his Death, strange thoughts might justly have risen in their hearts, and they might have said to him; Lord, it is but a few days ago since thou didst teach us not to believe our senses, but directly contrary to what we saw, *viz.* that the Bread which thou gavest us in the Sacrament, though we saw it and handled it and tasted it to be Bread, yet was not Bread, but thine own natural Body; and now thou appealest to our senses to prove that this is thy Body which we now see. If seeing and handling be an unquestionable Evidence that things are what they appear to our senses, then we were deceived before in the Sacrament; and if they be not, then we are not sure now that this is thy Body which we now see and handle, but it may be perhaps Bread under the appearance of Flesh and Bones; just as in the Sacrament, that which we saw and handled and tasted to be Bread was thy Flesh and Bones under the form and appearance of Bread. Now upon this supposition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of his Disciples: For if the Argument which our Saviour used did certainly prove to them that what they saw and handled was his Body,

his very natural Flesh and Bones, because they saw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as strongly prove that what they saw and received before in the Sacrament was not the natural Body and Blood of *Christ*, but real Bread and Wine: And consequently, that according to our Saviour's arguing after his Resurrection they had no reason to believe *Transubstantiation* before. For that very Argument by which our Saviour proves the reality of his Body after his Resurrection doth as strongly prove the reality of Bread and Wine after Consecration. But our Saviour's Argument was most infallibly good and true, and therefore the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is undoubtedly false.

Upon the whole matter I shall only say this, that some other Points between us and the Church of *Rome* are managed with some kind of wit and subtilty, but this of *Transubstantiation* is carried out by meer dint of impudence and facing down of Mankind.

And of this the more discerning Persons of that Church are of late grown so sensible that they would now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous Doctrine. But the Council of *Trent* hath rivetted it so fast into their Religion, and made it so necessary and essential a Point of their belief, that they cannot now part with it if they would; it is like a Mill-stone hung about the Neck of Popery which will sink it at the last.

And though some of their greatest Wits, as Cardinal *Perron*, and of late Monsieur *Arnauld*, have undertaken the defence of it in great Volumes; yet it is an absurdity of that monstrous and massy weight, that no Humane Authority or Wit are able to support it: It will make the very Pillars of St. *Peter's* crack, and requires more Volumes to make it good than would fill the *Vatican*.

And now I would apply my self to the poor deluded People of that Church, if they were either permitted by their Priests, or durst venture without their leave, to look into their Religion and to examine the Doctrines of it. Consider, and shew your selves Men. Do not suffer your selves any longer to be led blindfold, and by an implicit Faith in your Priests, into the belief of nonsense and contradiction. Think it enough and too much to let them rook you out of your money for pretended Pardons and counterfeit Reliques, but let not the Authority of any Priest or Church persuade you out of your Senses. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as Infidelity: and he who said, *Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed*; hath no where said, *Blessed are they that have seen and yet have not believed*; much less, *Blessed are they that believe directly contrary to what they see*.

To conclude this Discourse. By what hath been said upon this Argument it will appear, with how little Truth, and Reason, and regard to the interest of our common Christianity, it is so often said by our Adversaries, that there are as good Arguments for the belief of *Transubstantiation* as of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*: When they themselves do acknowledge with us that the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that according to the interpretation of them by the consent of the ancient Fathers: But their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* I have plainly shewn to have no such Ground, and that this is acknowledged by very many learned Men of their own Church. And this Doctrine of theirs being first plainly proved by us to be destitute of all Divine Warrant and Authority, our Objections against it from the manifold contradictions of it to Reason and Sense, are so many Demonstrations of the falshood of it. Against all which they have nothing to put in the opposite Scale but the Infallibility of their Church,

for

for which there is even less colour of proof from Scripture than for *Transubstantiation* it self. But so fond are they of their own Innovations and Errours, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how groundless and absurd soever, should be call'd in question; rather than not have their will of us in imposing upon us what they please, they will overthrow any Article of the Christian Faith, and shake the very foundations of our common Religion: A clear Evidence that the Church of *Rome* is not the true Mother, since she can be so well contented that Christianity should be destroyed rather than the Point in question should be decided against her.

SERMON

S E R M O N XXVII.

The Protestant Religion Vindicated, from the Charge of Singularity and Novelty.

Preached before the King at *Whitehall*, April 2. 1680.

Joshua xxiv. 15.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.

THese are the Words of *Joshua*; who after he had brought the People of *Israel* through many difficulties and hazards into the quiet possession of the promised Land, like a good Prince and Father of his Country, was very solicitous, before his Death, to lay the firmest foundation he could devise of the future happiness and prosperity of that People in whose present settlement he had, by the blessing of God, been so successful an Instrument.

And because he knew no means so effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the Religion and Worship of the true God, who had by so remarkable and miraculous a Providence planted them in that good Land; he summons the People together, and represents to them all those considerations that might engage them and their Posterity for ever, to continue in the true Religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promised to do more, if they would be faithful to him: And on the other hand, what fearful Calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in case they should transgress his Covenant, and go and serve other Gods. And after many Arguments to this purpose, he concludes with this earnest Exhortation at the 14th verse, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this Exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of insinuation as it were once more set them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: It being the nature of Man to stick more stedfastly to that which is not violently imposed, but is our own free and deliberate choice: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

Which Words offer to our consideration these following Observations.

1. *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.* *Joshua* does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. *That though Religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it self, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his People are of.* *Joshua* does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they served
God

God or Idols; he had sufficiently declared before which of these was to be preferred.

3. *The true Religion may have several prejudices and objections against it: If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*, intimating that upon some accounts, and to some Persons it may appear so.

4. *That the true Religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate Man's choice.* And this seems to be the true Reason why *Joshua* refers it to them: Not that he thought the thing indifferent, but because he was fully satisfied that the truth and goodness of the one above the other was so evident, that there was no danger that any prudent Man should make a wrong choice. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve*; intimating that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to chuse.

5. *The Example of Princes and Governours hath a very great influence upon the People in matters of Religion.* This I collect from the Context: And *Joshua* was sensible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true Religion to have those advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial Man's judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are easily impos'd upon and led into error, he thought fit to encline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory resolution in the case, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve; as for me, I and my house will serve the Lord.* Laws are a good security to Religion; but the Example of Governours is a living Law, which secretly over-rules the Minds of Men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

— *Non sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.*

The Lives and Actions of Princes have usually a greater sway upon the minds of the People than their Laws.

All these Observations are I think very natural, and very considerable. I shall not be able to speak to them all; but shall proceed so far as the time and your patience will give me leave.

First, *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.* *Joshua* does not put it to their choice whether they would worship any Deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a supposition, and which it is likely in those days had never enter'd into any Man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all People will be of some Religion; and then offers it to their consideration which they would pitch upon, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your Fathers served, &c.*

Religion is a thing to which Men are not only formed by Education and Custom, but, as *Tully* says, *Quo omnes duce natura vebimur*, It is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true Reason why some Religion or other hath so universally prevailed in all Ages and Places of the World.

The temporal felicity of Men, and the ends of Government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without Religion. Take away this, and all Obligations of Conscience cease: and where there is no obligation of Conscience, all security of Truth and Justice and mutual confidence among Men is at an end. For why should I repose confidence in that Man, why should I take his Word, or believe his Promise, or put any of my Interests and Concernments into his power, who hath no other restraint upon him but that of humane Laws, and is at liberty in his own Mind and Principles to do whatever he judgeth

judgeth to be expedient for his Interest, provided he can but do it without danger to himself? So that declar'd Atheism and Infidelity doth justly bring Men under a jealousy and suspicion with all Mankind; and every Wise Man hath reason to be upon his guard against those, from whom he hath no cause to expect more Justice and Truth and Equity in their dealings than he can compel them to by the meer dint and force of Laws. For by declaring themselves free from all other obligations, they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may trust them. Religion is the strongest Band of Humane Society; and God so necessary to the welfare and happiness of Mankind, as it could not have been more, if we could suppose the Being of God himself to have been purposely designed and contrived for the Benefit and Advantage of Men: So that very well may it be taken for granted, that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.

Secondly, *Though Religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it self, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his People are of.* Notwithstanding the supposition of the Text, *Joshua* doth not leave them at liberty whether they will serve God or Idols: But by a very Rhetorical Scheme of Speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the Worship of the true God.

To countenance and support the true Religion, and to take care that the People be instructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and seduce Men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magistrate. This Power the Kings of *Israel* always exercised, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from God himself. And the case is not altered since Christianity: The better the Religion is, the better it deserves the countenance and support of the Civil Authority. And this Power of the Civil Magistrate in matters of Religion was never called in question, but by the *Enthusiasts* of these latter times: And yet among these, every Father and Master of a Family claims this Power over his Children and Servants, at the same time that they deny it to the Magistrate over his Subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lyes. Hath a Master of a Family more Power over those under his Government than the Magistrate hath? No Man ever pretended it: Nay, so far is it from that, that the natural Authority of a Father may be, and often is, limited and restrained by the Laws of the Civil Magistrate. And why then may not a Magistrate exercise the same Power over his Subjects in Matters of Religion, which every Master challengeth to himself in his own Family, that is, to establish the true Worship of God in such manner and with such circumstances as he thinks best, and to permit none to affront it, or to seduce from it those that are under his care? And to prevent all misunderstandings in this matter, I do not hereby ascribe any thing to the Magistrate that can possibly give him any pretence of right to reject God's true Religion, or to declare what he pleases to be so, and what Books he pleases to be *Canonical* and *the Word of God*; and consequently to make a false Religion so currant by the stamp of his Authority, as to oblige his Subjects to the profession of it: Because he who acknowledgeth himself to derive all his Authority from God, can pretend to none against Him. But if a false Religion be established by Law, the case here is the same as in all other Laws that are sinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a lawful Authority; in this case the Subject is not bound to profess a false Religion, but patiently to suffer for the constant profession of the true.

And

And to speak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of Conscience warrants any Man, that is not extraordinarily commission'd, as the Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel were, and cannot justify that Commission by Miracles as they did, to affront the establish'd Religion of a Nation (though it be false) and openly to draw Men off from the profession of it in contempt of the Magistrate and the Law: All that Persons of a different Religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own Conscience and Religion; For which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of Profelytes to their own Religion, (though they be never so sure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary Commission from God to that purpose, or the Providence of God make way for it by the permission or connivance of the Magistrate. Not but that every man hath a *Right* to publish and propagate the true Religion, and to declare it against a false one; but there is no *Obligation* upon any Man to attempt this to no purpose, and when without a Miracle it can have no other effect but the loss of his own Life: unless he have an immediate Command and Commission from God to this purpose, and be endued with a power of Miracles, as a publick Seal and Testimony of that Commission, which was the case of the *Apostles*, who after they had received an immediate Commission were not to enter upon the execution of it, but to *stay at Jerusalem till they were endued with Power from on high*. In this case a Man is to abide all hazards, and may reasonably expect both extraordinary Assistance and Success, as the Apostles had; and even a miraculous Protection till his Work be done; and after that if he be call'd to suffer Martyrdom, a supernatural Support under those Sufferings.

And that they are guilty however of gross Hypocrisy who pretend a further obligation of Conscience in this matter, I shall give this plain Demonstration, which relies upon Concessions generally made on all hands, and by all Parties. No Protestant (that I know of) holds himself obliged to go and preach up his Religion and make Converts in *Spain* or *Italy*: Nor do either the *Protestant* Ministers or *Popish* Priests think themselves bound in Conscience to preach the Gospel in *Turky*, and to confute the *Alchoran*, to convert the *Mahometans*. And what is the Reason? Because of the Severity of the Inquisition in *Popish* Countries, and of the Laws in *Turky*. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of Conscience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the false pretence and disguise of it: but where there is a real obligation of Conscience, Danger should not deter men from their Duty, as it did not the Apostles: which shews their case to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was stated right at first. So that whatever is pretended, this is certain, that the Priests and Jesuits of the Church of *Rome* have in truth no more obligation of Conscience to make Converts here in *England* than in *Sweden* or *Turky*; where it seems the evident danger of the Attempt hath for these many years given them a perfect discharge from their Duty in this particular. I shall join the

Third and *Fourth* Observations together. That though the true Religion may have several Prejudices and Objections against it, yet upon examination there will be found those real Advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any considerate man's choice: If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you; Intimating that to some persons and upon some accounts it may appear so. But when the matter is truly represented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, Chuse you this day whom you will serve. Let but the Cause be fully

and impartially heard, and a wise man may determine himself upon the spot, and give his Verdict without ever going from the Bar.

The true Religion hath always lain under some Prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men; which commonly spring from one of these *two Causes*, either the *Prepossessions of a contrary Religion*, or the *contrariety of the true Religion to the vicious Inclinations and Practices of Men*, which usually lies at the bottom of all Prejudice against Religion. Religion is an Enemy to Men's beloved Lusts, and therefore they are Enemies to Religion. I begin with the *first*, which is as much as I shall be able to compass at this time.

1. *The Prepossessions of a false Religion*; which commonly pretends *two Advantages* on its side, *Antiquity and Universality*; and is wont to object to the true Religion *Novelty and Singularity*. And *both* these are intimated both before and after the Text: *Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: And chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose Land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the Religion of their Fathers, and had spread it-self over the greatest and most ancient Nations of the World, and the most famous for Learning and Arts, the *Chaldeans and Egyptians*; and was the Religion of the *Amorites* and the Nations round about them. So that *Joshua* represents the *Heathen Religion* with all its strength and advantage, and does not dissemble its confident pretence to *Antiquity and Universality*, whereby they would also insinuate the *Novelty and Singularity* of the Worship of the God of *Israel*. And it is very well worthy our observation, that one or both of these have always been the Exceptions of false Religions (especially of *Idolatry and Superstition*) against the true Religion. The ancient Idolaters of the World pretended their Religion to be *ancient and universal*, that their Fathers served these Gods, and that the Worship of the God of *Israel* was a plain Innovation upon the *Ancient and Catholick Religion* of the World, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their Fathers; and no doubt they were almost perpetually upon the *Jews* with that pert Question, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* and telling them that it was the Religion of a very small part and corner of the World, confined within a little Territory: But the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians and Chaldeans*, famous for all kind of Knowledge and Wisdom, and indeed all the Nations round about them, worshipped other Gods: And therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to condemn their Fathers and all the World, to be of a Religion different from all other Nations, and hereby to separate themselves and make a *Schism* from the rest of Mankind.

And when the Gospel appeared in the World, which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls *the time of Reformation*, the *Jews and Heathen* still renewed the same Objections against Christianity. The *Jews* urged against it, not the ancient *Scriptures* and the true Word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater Authority, the *unwritten Word*, the ancient and constant *Traditions* of their Church; and branded this new Religion with the name of Heresy, *After the way* (saith St. Paul) *that you call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets*: By which we see, that they of the Church of *Rome* were not the first who call'd it *Heresy* to reject humane Traditions, and to make the *Scriptures* the Rule of Faith: This was done long before by their reverend Predecessors, the *Scribes and Pharisees*.

And

And the *Gentiles*, they pretended against it both *Antiquity* and *Universality*, the constant belief and practice of all Ages, and almost all Places of the World; *Sequimur majores nostros qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, says *Symmachus*, *We follow our Forefathers, who happily followed theirs*; But you bring in a new Religion, never known nor heard of in the World before.

And when the Christian Religion was most miserably depraved and corrupted, in that dismal Night of Ignorance which over-spread these *Western* Parts of the World about the *Ninth* and *Tenth Centuries*; and many pernicious Doctrines and superstitious Practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the Christian Religion, and making it quite another thing from what our Saviour had left it; and these Corruptions and Abuses had continued for several Ages: No sooner was a *Reformation* attempted but the Church of *Rome* make the same out-cry of *Novelty* and *Singularity*: And though we have substantially answered it a thousand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare Question, *Where was your Religion before Luther*?

I shall therefore apply my self to answer these *two* Exceptions with all the brevity and clearness I can: And I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the Point of *Universality* (though that be no-wise necessary to justify the Truth of any Religion) ours is not inferiour to theirs; if we take in the Christians of all Ages, and of all parts of the World: And as to the Point of *Antiquity*, that our Faith and the Doctrines of our Religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all our Faith being unquestionably ancient, theirs not so.

1. As to the Point of *Universality*, which they of the Church of *Rome*, I know not for what Reason, will needs make an inseparable Property and Mark of the true Church. And they never flout at the Protestant Religion with so good a grace among the ignorant People, as when they are bragging of their Numbers, and despising poor Protestantism because embraced by so few. This *pestilent Northern Herefie* (as of late they scornfully call it) entertained it seems only in this cold and cloudy Corner of the World, by a company of dull stupid People, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the possibility of *Transubstantiation*; whereas to the more refined *Southern Wits* all these difficult and obscure Points are as clear as their Sun at Noon day.

But to speak to the thing it self. If Number be necessary to prove the truth and goodness of any Religion, *ours* upon enquiry will be found not so inconsiderable as our Adversaries would make it. Those of the *Reformed* Religion, according to the most exact calculations that have been made by learned Men, being esteemed not much unequal in number to those of the *Romish* Persuasion. But then if we take in the ancient Christian Church, whose Faith was the same with ours; and other Christian Churches at this day, which altogether are vastly greater and more numerous than the *Roman* Church, and which agree with us, several of them in very considerable Doctrines and Practices in dispute between us and the Church of *Rome*, and all of them in disclaiming that fundamental Point of the *Roman* Religion, and *Summ of Christianity* (as *Bellarmino* calls it) I mean the *Supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all Christians and Churches in the World*, then the Number on our side will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not stand upon this advantage with them. Suppose we were by much the fewer. So hath the true Church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth of their Religion. What think we of the Church in *Abraham's* time, which for ought we know was confined

fin'd to one Family; and one small Kingdom, that of *Melchisedec* King of *Salem*? What think we of it in *Moses* his time, when it was confin'd to one People wandring in a Wilderness? What of it in *Elijah's* time, when besides the two Tribes that worshipp'd at *Jerusalem*, there were in the other ten but seven thousand that had not bow'd their knee to *Baal*? What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Christian Church consisted of twelve Apostles, and seventy Disciples, and some few Followers beside? How would *Bellarmino* have despis'd this little Flock, because it wanted one or two of his goodliest Marks of the true Church, *Universality* and *Splendor*? And what think we of the Christian Church in the height of *Arianism* and *Pelagianism*, when a great part of *Christendom* was over-run with these Errors, and the number of the *Orthodox* was inconsiderable in comparison of the *Hereticks*.

But what need I to urge these Instances? As if the Truth of a Religion were to be estimat'd and carried by the *major Vote*; which as it can be an Argument to none but Fools, so I dare say no honest and wise Man ever made use of it for a solid Proof of the Truth and Goodness of any Church or Religion. If Multitude be an Argument that Men are in the right, in vain then hath the Scripture said, *thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*: For if this Argument be of any force, the greater Number never go wrong.

2. As to the point of *Antiquity*. This is not always a certain Mark of the true Religion. For surely there was a time when Christianity began and was a new Profession, and then both *Judaism* and *Paganism* had certainly the advantage of it in point of Antiquity. But the proper Question in this Case is, *Which is the true ancient Christian Faith, that of the Church of Rome or Ours*? And to make this matter plain, it is to be consider'd, that a great part of the *Roman* Faith is the same with *Ours*; as, namely, the Articles of the Apostles Creed, as explain'd by the first four General Councils. And these make up our whole Faith, so far as concerns matters of meer and simple Belief, that are of absolute necessity to Salvation. And in this Faith of *Ours*, there is nothing wanting that can be shewn in any ancient Creed of the Christian Church. And thus far *Our* Faith, and *theirs* of the *Roman* Church, are undoubtedly of equal Antiquity, that is, as ancient as Christianity itself.

All the Question is, as to the matters in difference between us. The principal whereof are the twelve new Articles of the Creed of Pope *Pius* the IV. concerning the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, *Transubstantiation*, the *Communion in one kind only*, *Purgatory*, &c. not one of which is to be found in any ancient Creed or Confession of Faith generally allow'd in the Christian Church. The Antiquity of these we deny, and affirm them to be Innovations: and have particularly prov'd them to be so, not only to the answering, but almost to the silencing of our Adversaries.

And as for the *negative* Articles of the *Protestant* Religion, in opposition to the Errors and Corruptions of the *Romish* Faith, these are by accident become a part of our Faith and Religion, occasioned by their Errors; as the renouncing of the Doctrines of *Arianism* became part of the *Catholick* Religion, after the rise of that Heresie.

So that the Case is plainly this; We believe and teach all that is contained in the *Creeds* of the ancient Christian Church, and was by them esteem'd necessary to Salvation: and this is *Our* Religion. But now the Church of *Rome* hath innovat'd in the Christian Religion, and made several Additions to it; and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it; And these *Additions* and *Corruptions* are their Religion,
as

as it is distinct from ours; and both because they are *Corruptions* and *Novelties* we have rejected them: And our rejection of these is our Reformation: And our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be so ancient as their *Corruptions*: All Reformation necessarily supposing *Corruptions* and *Errors* to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leisure to answer that captious Question of theirs, *Where was your Religion before Luther?* Where-ever Christianity was; in some places more pure, in others more corrupted; but especially in these *Western* parts of Christendom over-grown for several Ages with manifold *Errors* and *Corruptions*, which the Reformation hath happily cut off, and cast away. So that though our *Reformation* was as late as *Luther*, our *Religion* is as ancient as Christianity it self. For when the *Additions* which the Church of *Rome* hath made to the *ancient* Christian Faith, and their *Innovations* in Practice are pared off, that which remains of *their* Religion is *ours*; and *this* they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient Christianity.

And what other Answer than this could the *Jews* have given to the like Question, if it had been put to them by the *ancient Idolaters* of the World, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* but the very same in substance which we now give to the Church of *Rome*: That for many Ages the Worship of the one true God had been corrupted, and the Worship of Idols had prevailed in a great part of the World; that *Abraham* was raised up by God to reform Religion, and to reduce the Worship of God to its first Institution; in the doing whereof he necessarily separated Himself and his Family from the Communion of those Idolaters. So that though the *Reformation* which *Abraham* began was new, yet his *Religion* was truly ancient; as old as that of *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and *Adam*. Which is the same in substance that we say, and with the same and equal Reason.

And if they will still complain of the *Newness* of our *Reformation*, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however better late than never. Besides, it ought to be considered, that this Objection of *Novelty* lies against all Reformation whatsoever, though never so necessary, and though things be never so much amiss: And it is in effect to say, that if things be once bad, they must never be better, but must always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a Reformation must begin some time, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real Reformation be made, the thing justifies it self; and no objection of *Novelty* ought to take place against that which upon all accounts was so fit and necessary to be done. And if they of the Church of *Rome* would but speak their Mind out in this matter, they are not so much displeased at the Reformation which we have made because it is *new*, as because it is a *Reformation*. It was the humour of *Babylon* of old (as the Prophet tells us) that she *would not be healed*; and this is still the temper of the Church of *Rome*, they *hate to be reformed*; and rather than acknowledge themselves to have been once in an Error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at first made, and still continues the Breach and Separation between us, of which we are no-wise guilty who have only reformed what was amiss, but they who obstinately persist in their Errors, and will needs impose them upon us, and will not let us be of their Communion unless we will say they are no Errors.

II. The other *Prejudice* against the true Religion is, *the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of Men.*

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It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon humane nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all Objections against Religion, *Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

But this Argument will require a Discourse by it-self, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer, whilst I make some Reflections upon what hath been already delivered.

You see what are the *Exceptions* which Idolatry and Superstition have always made, and do at this day still make, against the true Religion; and how slight and insignificant they are.

But do we then charge the Church of *Rome* with Idolatry? Our Church most certainly does so, and hath always done it from the beginning of the Reformation; in her *Homilies* and *Liturgy*, and *Canons*, and in the *Writings* of her best and ablest *Champions*. And though I have, as impartially as I could, considered what have been said on both sides in this Controversy; yet I must confess I could never yet see any tolerable defence made by them against this heavy Charge. And they themselves acknowledge themselves to be greatly under the suspicion of it, by saying (as Cardinal *Perron* and others do) that the Primitive Christians for some Ages did neither worship Images, nor pray to Saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the Heathen Idolatry: And which is yet more; divers of their most learned Men do confess, that if *Transubstantiation* be not true, they are gross Idolaters as any in the World. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in complement to them, and to acquit them from the charge of Idolatry, we should presently deny our Senses, and believe *Transubstantiation*; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have reason to charge them with Idolatry.

But we own them to be a true Church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of Idolatry: This they often urge us withal, and there seems at first sight to be something in it: And for that reason I shall endeavour to give so clear and satisfactory an Answer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, because they still retain the Essentials of Christianity, and profess to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, that notwithstanding their Corruptions they may still retain the true Essence of a Church: As a Man may be truly and really a Man, though he have the Plague upon him; and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves: But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to push the matter home; Are they sure that this is a firm and good Consequence, That *if they be Idolaters, they cannot be a true Church*? Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themselves a true Church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not understand it of themselves, it is fit they should be told that there is a great difference between Concessions of Charity and of Necessity, and that a very different use ought to be made of them. We are willing to think the best of them; but if they dislike our Charity in this point, nothing against the hair: If they will forgive us this Injury, we will not offend them any more: But rather than have any farther difference with them about this matter, we will for quietness sake compound it thus; That till they can clearly acquit themselves from being Idolaters, they shall never more against their wills be esteemed a true Church.

And

And now to draw to a conclusion.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, and to worship him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ, as he hath given us Commandment; because there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, The Man Christ Jesus. If it seem evil unto you, to have the liberty to serve God in a Language you can understand; and to have the free use of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto Salvation; and to have the Sacraments of our Religion entirely administred to us, as our Lord did institute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it seem good to us, to put our Necks once more under that Yoke which our Fathers were not able to bear: If it be really a Preferment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a Privilege to be deposed by him at his pleasure, and a Courtesy to be kill'd at his Command: If to pray without Understanding, and to obey without Reason, and to believe against Sense; if Ignorance, and implicit Faith, and an Inquisition, be in good earnest such charming and desirable things: Then welcome Popery; which, where-ever thou comest, dost infallibly bring all these wonderful Privileges and Blessings along with thee.

But, the Question is not now about the *Choice* but the *Change* of our Religion, after we have been so long settled in the quiet possession and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a false Religion. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods?* And surely there is much more reason why we should be tenacious of the Truth, and hold fast that which is good.

We have the best Religion in the World, the very same which the *Son of God* revealed, which the *Apostles* planted and confirmed by Miracles, and which the *noble Army of Martyrs* sealed with their Blood: And we have retrench'd from it all false Doctrines and superstitious Practices, which have been added since. And I think we may without immodesty say, That upon the plain square of Scripture and Reason, of the Tradition and Practice of the first and best Ages of the Christian Church, we have fully justified *Our Religion*; and made it evident to the World, that our Adversaries are put to very hard shifts, and upon a perpetual disadvantage in the defence of *Theirs*.

I wish it were as easy for us to justify our Lives as our Religion. I do not mean in comparison of our Adversaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in comparison of the Rules of our holy Religion, from which we are infinitely swerv'd; which I would to God we all did seriously consider and lay to heart: I say in comparison of the Rules of our Holy Religion, which *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, in expectation of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.*

SERMON XXVIII.

Objections against the true Religion answer'd.

Joshua xxiv. 15.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.

THese Words, as I have already declared in the former Discourse, are the last Counsel and Advice which *Joshua* gave to the People of *Israel*, after he had safely conducted them into the Land of *Canaan*. And that he might the more effectually persuade them to continue stedfast in the Worship of the true God, by an eloquent kind of Insinuation he doth as it were once more set them at liberty and leave them to their own choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

The plain sense of which words may be resolved into this Proposition, That notwithstanding all the Prejudices and Objections against the true Religion, yet it hath those real Advantages on its side that it may safely be referred to any impartial and considerate man's choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*; intimating that to some persons, and upon some accounts, it may seem so: but when the matter is thoroughly examined, the resolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

The true Religion hath always lain under some Prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men arising chiefly from these two Causes; the *Prepossessions of a false Religion*; and the *contrariety of the true Religion to the Inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of Practice.*

First, From the *Prepossessions of a false Religion*; which hath always been wont to lay claim to *Antiquity and Universality*, and to charge the true Religion with *Novelty and Singularity*. And both these are intimated before the Text; *Put away the gods whom your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and chuse you this day whom you will serve.* It was pretended that the Worship of Idols was the ancient Religion of the World, of those great Nations the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and of all the Nations round about them. But this hath already been considered at large.

Secondly, There are another sort of Prejudices against Religion, more apt to stick with Men of better sense and reason; and these arise principally from the *contrariety of the true Religion to the Inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of Practice.* It is pretended that Religion is a heavy Yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon humane nature, and that the Laws of it bear too hard upon the general Inclinations of Mankind.

I shall not at present meddle with the speculative Objections against Religion, upon account of the pretended unreasonableness of many things in point of Belief: because the contrariety of the true Religion to the Inclinations

tions of Men, and the uneasiness of it in point of Practice, is that which in truth lies at the bottom of Atheism and Infidelity, and raises all that animosity which is in the Minds of bad Men against Religion, and exasperates them to oppose it with all their Wit and Malice: *Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* And if this prejudice were but once removed, and Men were in some measure reconciled to the Practice of Religion, the speculative Objections against it would almost vanish of themselves: for there wants little else to enable a Man to answer them, but a willingness of Mind to have them answered, and that we have no interest and inclination to the contrary. And therefore I shall at present wholly apply my self to remove this prejudice against Religion, from the contrariety of it to the inclinations of Men, and the uneasiness of it in point of Practice.

And there are two parts of this Objection.

1st. That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of Men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God. And,

2^{ly}. That all of them together are a heavy Yoke, and do lay too great a restraint upon humane Nature, intrrenching too much upon the Pleasures and Liberty of it.

I. That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of Men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God. So that God seems to have set our Nature and our Duty at variance, to have given us Appetites and Inclinations one way, and Laws another: Which if it were true, must needs render the practice of Religion very grievous and uneasy.

The force of this Objection is very smartly expressed in those celebrated Verses of a Noble Poet of our own, which are so frequently in the mouths of many who are thought to bear no good will to Religion.

*O wearisome condition of Humanity,
Born under one Law, to another bound;
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden Vanity;
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
If Nature did not take delight in Blood,
She would have made more easie ways to good.*

So that this Objection would fain charge the sins of Men upon God; first upon account of the evil Inclinations of our Nature; and then of the contrariety of our Duty to those Inclinations. And from the beginning Man hath always been apt to lay the blame of his faults where it can least lie, upon Goodness and Perfection it self. The very first sin that ever Man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw upon God: *The Woman whom thou gavest me (saith Adam) she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* And his Posterity are still apt to excuse themselves the same way. But to return a particular Answer to this Objection.

I. We will acknowledge so much of it as is true; That there is a great degeneracy and corruption of Humane Nature, from what it was originally framed when it came out of God's hands: of which the Scripture gives us this account, that it was occasioned by the voluntary transgression of a plain and easie Command given by God to our first Parents. And this weakness contracted by the fall of our first Parents naturally descends upon us their

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Posterity,

Posterity and visibly discovers it self in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good.

And of this the Heathen Philosophers, from the Light of Nature, and their own Experience and Observation of themselves and others, were very sensible; that Humane Nature was very much declined from its primitive rectitude, and sunk into a weak and drooping and sickly State which they called a *μετεστροφικη*, the Moulting of the Wings of the Soul: But yet they were so just and reasonable as not to charge this upon God, but upon some corruption and impurity contracted by the Soul in a former State, before its Union with the Body. For the descent of the Soul into these gross earthly Bodies they looked upon as partly the Punishment of Faults committed in a former State, and partly as the opportunity of a new Trial in order to its purgation and recovery. And this was the best account they were able to give of this matter, without the Light of Divine Revelation.

So that the degeneracy of Humane Nature is universally acknowledged, and God acquitted from being the cause of it: But however, the Posterity of *Adam* do all partake of the weakness contracted by his fall, and do still labour under the miseries and inconveniencies of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakened and disordered, yet they are not destroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural Judgment and Conscience doth still dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impressions of the Natural Law, as to the great lines of our duty, are still legible upon our hearts. So that the Law written in God's Word is not contrary to the Law written upon our hearts. And therefore it is not truly said, *that we are born under one Law and bound to another*, but the great disorder is, that our inferiour Faculties, our sensitive Appetite and Passions, are broke loose and have got head of our Reason, and are upon all occasions apt to rebel against it: but our Judgment still dictates the very same things which the Law of God doth enjoin.

It is likewise very visible, that the sad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all; whether from the better or worse temper of our Bodies, or from some other more secret cause, I shall not determine, because I know not: But that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneness to Evil, and some seeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly discover in many very early and forward inclinations to some kinds of vertue and goodness: which being cultivated by Education, may under the ordinary influence of God's grace be carried on with great ease to great perfection.

And there are others who are not so strongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good instruction and example in their tender years they may be swayed the other way, and without great difficulty formed to goodness.

There are some indeed (which is the hardest case) in whom there do very early appear strong propensions and inclinations to evil, especially to some particular kinds of Vice: But the case of these is not desperate; though greater attention and care, and a much more prudent management is required in the Education of such Persons to correct their evil tempers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the right way: and if the seeds of Piety and Vertue be but carefully sown at first, very much may be done by this means, even in the most depraved Natures towards the altering and changing of them; however, to the checking and controuling of their vicious inclinations. And if these Persons, when they come to riper years, would pursue these Advantages of Education, and take some Pains with them

themselves, and earnestly seek the assistance of God's Grace, I doubt not but even these Persons by degrees might at last get the mastery of their unhappy Tempers.

For next to the Being and Perfections of God, and the Immortality of our own Souls, there is no Principle of Religion that I do more firmly believe than this, that God hath that Love for Men, that if we do heartily beg his assistance, and be not wanting to our selves, he will afford it to every one of us in proportion to our need of it; that he is always beforehand with us, and prevents every Man with the gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but many very perverse Natures have thus been reclaimed. For God, who is the *Lover of Souls* (as the Son of *Sirach* calls him) though he may put some Men under more difficult circumstances of becoming good than others, yet he leaves no Man under a fatal necessity of being wicked and perishing everlastingly. He tenderly considers every Man's Case and Circumstances, and it is we that pull destruction upon our selves, with the Works of our own hands: But as sure as God is good and just, no Man in the World is ruined for want of having sufficient help and aid afforded to him by God for his recovery.

2. It is likewise to be considered that God did not design to create Man in the full possession of happiness at first, but to train him up to it by the Tryal of his Obedience. But there could be no Tryal of our Obedience without some difficulty in our Duty: Either by reason of powerful Temptations from without, or of cross and perverse Inclinations from within.

Our first Parents, in their state of innocency, had only the Tryal of Temptation without; to which they yielded, and were overcome; having only a natural power to have resisted the Temptation, without any aid of Supernatural Grace: And that weakness to Good, and proneness to Evil which they by wilful transgression contracted, is naturally derived to us: and we necessarily partake of the bitterness and impurity of the Fountain from whence we spring. So that we now labour under a double difficulty; being assaulted by Temptations from without, and incited by evil Inclinations from within: But then, to balance these, we have a double Advantage; that a greater Reward is proposed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our first Parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a Supernatural Power to conflict with these difficulties. So that, according to the merciful dispensation of God, all this conflict between our Inclination and our Duty does only serve to give a fairer opportunity for the fitting Tryal of our Obedience, and for the more glorious Reward of it.

3. God hath provided an universal Remedy for this degeneracy and weakness of humane Nature: So that what we lost by the first *Adam* is abundantly repaired to us by the second. This *St. Paul* tells us at large, *Rom. 5.* That *as by one Man sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin; so the grace of God hath abounded to all Men by Jesus Christ*; And that to such a degree, as effectually to countervail the ill effects of Original Sin, and really to enable Men, if they be not wanting to themselves, to master and subdue all the bad Inclinations of Nature, even in those who seem to be naturally most corrupt and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflection upon God acknowledge, that though he did not at first create Man *sick and weak*, yet he having made himself so, his Posterity are born so. But then God hath not left us helpless in this weak and miserable State, into which by wilful transgression Mankind is fallen: But as he commands us to be

found, so he affords us sufficient aids of his grace by Jesus Christ for our recovery.

And though *there is a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds, and captivating us to the Law of Sin and Death; i. e.* though our sensitive Appetite and Passions are apt to rebel against the Reason of our Minds and the Dictates of our natural Conscience, yet every Christian may say with St. Paul, *Thanks be to God, who hath given us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e.* hath not left us destitute of a sufficient aid and strength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of Sin, by the powerful assistance of that grace which is so plentifully offered to us in the Gospel. And this is the case of all those who live under the Gospel; As for others, as their case is best known to God, so we have no reason to doubt but that his infinite goodness and Mercy takes that care of them which becomes *a merciful Creator*: Though both the Measures, and the Methods of his Mercy towards them are secret and unknown to us.

4. The hardest contest between Man's Inclination and Duty, is in those who have wilfully contracted Vicious Habits and by that means, rendred their Duty much more difficult to themselves: having greatly improved the evil inclinations of nature by wicked practice and custom. For the *Scripture* plainly supposeth, that Men may debauch even corrupt nature, and make themselves ten-fold more the Children of Wrath and of the Devil than they were by nature.

This is a case sadly to be deplored, but yet not utterly to be despaired of. And therefore those who by a long progress in an evil course, are plunged into this sad condition, ought to consider that they are not to be rescued out of it by an ordinary Resolution, and a common Grace of God. Their case plainly requires an extraordinary Remedy. For he that is deeply engaged in Vice is like a Man laid fast in a Bogg, who by a faint and lazy struggling to get out, does but spend his strength to no purpose, and sinks himself the deeper into it: The only way is, by a resolute and vigorous effort to spring out, if possible, at once. And therefore in this case, to a vigorous Resolution there must be joined an earnest application to God for his powerful Grace and Assistance, to help us out of this miserable State. And if we be truly sensible of the desperate danger of our condition, the pressing necessity of our case will be apt to inspire us with a mighty Resolution. For *power and necessity are neighbours*, and never dwell far asunder. When Men are sorely urged and pressed, they find a power in themselves which they thought they had not. Like a Coward driven up to a wall, who in the extremity of distress and despair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or like a Man lame of the Gout, who being assaulted by a present and terrible danger forgets his Disease, and will find his Legs rather than lose his Life.

And in this, I do not speak above the rate of Humane Nature, and what Men thoroughly roused and awakened to a sense of their danger, by a mighty Resolution may morally do, through that Divine Grace and Assistance which is ever ready to be afforded to well resolved Minds, and such as are sincerely bent to return to God and their Duty. More than this I cannot say for the encouragement of those who have proceeded far in an evil Course: And they who have made their case so very desperate, ought to be very thankful to God that there is any Remedy left for them.

5. From all that hath been said, it evidently appears, how malicious a suggestion it is, that God seeks the destruction of Men, and hath made his Laws on purpose so difficult and cross to our inclinations that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our disobedience to them. Alas, we are so absolutely under the Power of God, and so unable to withstand it, that he may destroy us when he pleaseth, without seeking pretences for it: *For who hath resisted his will?* If goodness were not his nature, he hath power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our destruction is plainly of our selves, and God is free from the Blood of all Men. And he hath not made the way to Eternal Life so difficult to any of us, with a design to make us miserable, but that we by a vigorous resolution, and unwearied diligence, and a patient continuance in Well-doing, might win and wear a more glorious Crown, and be fit to receive a more ample Reward from his Bounty and Goodness: yea, in some sense, I may say, from his Justice; *For God is not unrighteous, to forget our Work and Labour and Love.* He will fully consider all the Pains that any of us take in his service, and all the difficulties that we struggle with out of Love to God and Goodness. So that this Objection, from the clashing of our Duty with our Inclination, is I hope fully answered: Since God hath provided so powerful and effectual a Remedy against our natural Impotency and Infirmary, by the Grace of the Gospel.

And though to those who have wilfully contracted Vicious Habits, a Religious and Vertuous Course of Life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lies in our first entrance upon it; and when that is over, the ways of goodness are as easie as it is fit any thing should be that is so excellent, and that hath the encouragement of so glorious a Reward. Custom will reconcile Men almost to any thing; but there are those Charms in the ways of Wisdom and Vertue, that a little Acquaintance and Conversation with them will soon make them more delightful than any other course. And who will grudge any Pains and Trouble to bring himself into so safe and happy a condition? After we have tryed both Courses, of Religion and Profaneness, of Virtue and Vice, we shall certainly find, that nothing is so wise, so easie, and so comfortable as to be virtuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I desire more of any Man in this matter, than to follow the soberest Convictions of his own Mind, and to do that which upon the most serious consideration at all times, in Prosperity and Affliction, in Sickness and Health, in the time of Life, and at the Hour of Death, he judgeth wisest and safest for him to do. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the Objection, *That the Laws of Religion* (and particularly, of the *Christian Religion*) *are a heavy yoke, laying too great a restraint upon humane Nature, and entrencing too much upon the Pleasures and Liberty of it.*

There was, I confess, some pretence for this Objection against the *Jewish Religion*: which by the multitude of its positive Institutions and external Observances must needs have been very burthensome. And the same Objection lies against the Church of *Rome*, who (as they have handled Christianity) by the unreasonable number of their needless and senseless Ceremonies, have made the Yoke of *Christ* heavier than that of *Moses*, and the *Gospel* a more carnal Commandment than the *Law*. So that *Christianity* is lost among them in the Trappings and Accoutrements of it; with which instead of adorning Religion they have strangely disguised

disguised it, and quite stifled it in the crowd of external Rites and Ceremonies,

But the pure Christian Religion, as it was delivered by our Saviour, hath hardly any thing in it that is positive; except the two Sacraments, which are not very troublesome neither, but very much for our Comfort and Advantage, because they convey and confirm to us the great Blessings and Privileges of our Religion. In other things, Christianity hath hardly imposed any other Laws upon us but what are enacted in our Natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental Laws of it; nothing but what every Man's Reason either dictates to him to be necessary, or approves as highly fit and reasonable.

But we do most grossly mistake the nature of Pleasure and Liberty, if we promise them to our selves in any evil and wicked course. For, upon due search and tryal it will be found, that true pleasure, and perfect freedom, are no-where to be found but in the Practice of Vertue, and in the Service of God. The Laws of Religion do not abridge us of any pleasure that a wise Man can desire, and safely enjoy, I-mean without a greater evil and trouble consequent upon it. The pleasure of commanding our Appetites, and governing our Passions, by the Rules of Reason (which are the Laws of God) is infinitely to be preferred before any sensual Pleasure whatsoever: Because it is the pleasure of Wisdom and Discretion; and gives us the satisfaction of having done that which is best and fittest for reasonable Creatures to do. Who would not rather chuse to govern himself as *Scipio* did, amidst all the temptations and opportunities of sensual pleasure which his Power and Victories presented to him, than to wallow in all the delights of Sense?

Nothing is more certain in Reason and Experience, than that every inordinate Appetite and Affection is a punishment to it self; and is perpetually crossing its own pleasure, and defeating its own satisfaction, by over-shooting the Mark it aims at. For instance, *Intemperance* in eating and drinking, instead of delighting and satisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it; and instead of quenching a natural thirst, which it is extremely pleasant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troublesome and endless. The pleasure of *Revenge*, as soon as it is executed turns into Grief and Pity, Guilt and Remorse, and a thousand melancholy wishes that we had restrained our selves from so unreasonable an Act. And the same is as evident in other sensual Excesses, not so fit to be described. We may trust *Epicurus* for this, that there can be no true pleasure without temperance in the use of pleasure. And God and Reason have set us no other bounds concerning the use of Sensual Pleasures, but that we take care not to be injurious to our selves, or others, in the kind, or degree of them. And it is very visible, that all Sensual Excess is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: As it goes beyond the limits of nature, it begets bodily Pains and Diseases: As it transgresseth the Rules of Reason and Religion, it breeds guilt and remorse in the Mind. And these are, beyond comparison, the two greatest Evils in this World; a diseased Body, and a discontented Mind; And in this I am sure I speak to the inward Feeling and Experience of Men; and say nothing but what every vicious Man finds, and hath a more lively sense of, than is to be expressed by Words.

When all is done, there is no Pleasure comparable to that of Innocency, and freedom from the stings of a guilty Conscience; This is a pure and spiritual Pleasure, much above any sensual delight. And yet among all the delights of Sense, that of health (which is the natural consequent of a sober, and

and chaste, and regular Life) is a sensual Pleasure far beyond that of any Vice: For it is the Life of Life; and that which gives a grateful relish to all our other Enjoyments. It is not indeed so violent and transporting a Pleasure, but it is pure and even, and lasting, and hath no guilt and regret, no sorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a Worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful Pleasures, and makes them to be bitterness in the end.

All the ways of sin are so beset with thorns and difficulties on every side, there are so many unanswerable objections against Vice, from the unreasonableness and ugliness of it, from the remorse that attends it, from the endless misery that follows it, that none but the rash and inconsiderate can obtain leave of themselves to commit it. It is the Daughter of inadvertency, and Blindness and Folly; and the Mother of Guilt, and Repentance, and Woe. There is no Pleasure that will hold out and abide with us to the last, but that of Innocency and Well-doing. All sin is folly; and as *Seneca* truly says, *omnis stultitia laborat fastidio sui*; *All folly soon grows sick and weary of it self.* The pleasure of it is slight and superficial, but the trouble and remorse of it pierceth our very hearts.

And then as to the other part of the Objection, *That Religion restrains us of our Liberty*: The contrary is evidently true, that Sin and Vice are the greatest slavery. For he is truly a slave, who is not at liberty to follow his own Judgment, and to do those things which he is inwardly convinced it is best for him to do; but is subject to the unreasonable Commands, and the tyrannical Power and Violence of his Lusts and Passions: So that he is not Master of himself, but other Lords have got dominion over him, and he is perfectly at their Beck and Command. One Vice or Passion bids him go, and he goes; another come, and he comes; and a third do this, and he doth it. The Man is at perpetual variance with his own Mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himself. And it is all one, whether a Man be subject to the Will and Humour of another Person, or to his own Lusts and Passions. Only this of the two is the worse; because the Tyrant is at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and so much the harder to be vanquish'd and overcome.

But the Service of God, and Obedience to his Laws is perfect Liberty. Because the Law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own Reason, and from the Benefit and Advantage of doing it; nothing but what is much more for our own interest to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And in some things God exacts obedience of us more indispensibly, and under severer Penalties, it is because those things are in their Nature more necessary to our felicity. And how could God possibly have dealt more graciously and kindly with us, than to oblige us most strictly to that which is most evidently for our good; and to make such Laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? So that taking all things into consideration, the interest of our Bodies and our Souls, of the present and the future, of this World and the other, Religion is the most reasonable and wise, the most comfortable and compendious course that any Man can take in order to his own happiness.

The consideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a most prevalent Argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the Laws of God; which are in truth so many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the real Privileges of our nature, and the proper Means
and

and Causes of our happiness: And do restrain us from nothing but from doing mischief to our selves, from playing the fools and making our selves miserable.

And therefore instead of opposing Religion, upon pretence of the unreasonable restraints of it, we ought to thank God heartily, hath he that laid so strict an obligation upon us to regard and pursue our true interest; and hath been pleased to take that care of us, as to set bounds to our loose and wild Appetites by our Duty; and in giving us Rules to live by, hath no ways complied with our inconsiderate and foolish Inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: But hath made those things necessary for us to do, which in all respects are best for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought in all reason to be our free and first choice: And hath made the folly and inconvenience of sin so grossly palpable, that every Man may see it before-hand that will but consider, and at the beginning of a bad course look to the end of it; and they that will not consider, shall be forced from woful experience at last to acknowledge it, when they find the dismal effects and mischievous consequences of their Vices still meeting them at one turn or other.

And now, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, I hope we are satisfied that Religion is no such intolerable yoke; and that upon a due and full consideration of things it cannot *seem evil* unto any of us *to serve the Lord*: nay, on the contrary, that it is absolutely necessary, both to our present Peace and our future Felicity: And that a religious and vertuous Life is not only upon all accounts the most prudent, but after we are entred upon it, and accustomed to it, the most pleasant course that any Man can take: and however inconsiderate Men may complain of the restraints of Religion, that it is not one jot more our Duty, than it is our Privilege and our Happiness.

And I cannot think that upon sober consideration any Man could see reason to thank God to be released from any of his Laws, or to have had the contrary to them enjoined. Let us suppose, that the Laws of God had been just the *Reverse* of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under severe Penalties, to deal falsely and fraudulently with our Neighbour; to demean our selves ungratefully to our best Friends and Benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to pursue sensual Pleasures to the endangering of our Health and Life: How should we have complained of the unreasonableness of these Laws, and have murmured at the slavery of such intolerable Impositions? And yet now that God hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our Reason and Interest, we are not pleased neither. What will content us? As our Saviour expostulates in a like case, *Whereunto shall I liken this Generation? It is like unto Children playing in the Market-place, and calling unto their Companions, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.* This is perfectly childish, to be pleased with nothing; neither to like this, nor the contrary. We are not contented with the Laws of God as they are, and yet the contrary to them we should have esteemed the greatest grievance in the World.

And if this be true that the Laws of God, how contrary soever to our vicious inclinations, are really calculated for our benefit and advantage, it would almost be an affront to wise and considerate Men to importune them to their interest; and with great earnestness to perswade them to that which in all respects is so visibly for their advantage, *Chuse you therefore this day whom you will serve; God, or your lusts.* And take up a
speedy

speedy Resolution in a matter of so great and pressing a Concernment; chuse you *this day*.

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a Thing, it is good to deliberate long before we undertake it: but where the Thing is not only safe but beneficial, and not only hugely beneficial but highly necessary; when our Life and our Happiness depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it; there we cannot be too sudden in our Resolution, nor too speedy in execution of it. That which is evidently safe, needs no Deliberation; and that which is absolutely necessary will admit of none.

Therefore resolve upon it out of hand; *To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* In the days of your Youth and Health; for *that is the acceptable time, that is the day of Salvation;* Before the *evil day comes*, and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehension and approach of Death, when Men fly to God only for fear of his Wrath. For the greatest Atheists and Infidels, (when they come to dye, if they have any of that Reason left, which they have used so ill) have commonly right Opinions about God and Religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of Atheism leaves them, as the Devil uses to do Witches when they are in Distress. Then with *Nebuchadnezzar*, when they are recovered from being Beasts, they look up to Heaven, and their Understanding returns to them: Then they believe a God, and cannot help it; they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus *Lucretius*, one of their great Authors observes, that when Men are in distress,

Acrius advertunt animos ad Religionem.

The thoughts of Religion are then more quick and pungent upon their Minds.

*Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur, & eripitur persona, manet res.*

Mens words then come from the bottom of their Hearts; the Mask is taken off, and things then appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this Choice: Nay, then it can hardly be Choice, but Necessity. Men do not then chuse to serve the Lord, but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have served their Lusts all their Life long, and now they would fain serve themselves of God at the hour of Death. They have done what they can, by their insolent contempt and defiance of the Almighty, to make themselves miserable; and now that they can stand out no longer against him, they are contented at last to be beholding to him to make them happy. The Mercies of God are vast and boundless, but yet methinks it is too great a Presumption in all reason, for Men to design before-hand to make the Mercy of God, the Sanctuary and Retreat of a sinful Life.

To draw then to a Conclusion of this Discourse. If Safety, or Pleasure, or Liberty, or Wisdom, or Vertue, or even Happiness it self have any temptation in them, Religion hath all these Baits and Allurements. What *Tully* says of *Philosophy*, is much more true of the *Christian Religion*, the Wisdom and Philosophy which is from above; *Nunquam satis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat, omne tempus ætatis sine molestia degere possit.* We can never praise it enough, since whoever lives according to the Rules of it, may pass the whole Age of his

his Life (I may add, his whole duration, this Life and the other) without trouble.

Philosophy hath given us several plausible Rules for the attaining of peace and tranquility of Mind, but they fall very much short of bringing Men to it. The very best of them fail us upon the greatest Occasions. But the *Christian Religion* hath effectually done all that which *Philosophy* pretended to, and aimed at. The Precepts and Promises of the Holy Scriptures are every way sufficient for our Comfort, and for our Instruction in Righteousness: to correct all the Errors, and to bear us up under all the Evils and Adversities of Humane Life; especially that holy and heavenly Doctrine which is contained in the admirable Sermons of our Saviour, *Quem cum legimus, quem Philosophum non contemnimus?* whose excellent Discourses when we read, what Philosopher do we not despise? None of the *Philosophers* could, upon sure grounds, give that encouragement to their *Scholars* which our Saviour does to his *Disciples*; *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easie, and my burthen is light.*

This is the advantage of the *Christian Religion* sincerely believed and practised, that it gives perfect rest and tranquility to the mind of Man: It frees us from the guilt of an evil Conscience, and from the power of our Lusts, and from the slavish fear of Death, and of the vengeance of another World. It builds our comfort upon a Rock, which will abide all Storms, and remain unshaken in every Condition, and will last and hold out for ever: *He that beareth these sayings of mine, and doth them (saith our Lord) I will liken him to a wise Man, who built his House upon a Rock.*

In short, Religion makes the Life of Man a wise Design, regular and constant to its self; because it unites all our Resolutions and Actions in one great End: Whereas without Religion the Life of Man is a wild, and fluttering, and inconsistent Thing, without any certain Scope and Design. The vicious Man lives at random, and acts by chance: For he that walks by no Rule, can carry on no settled and steady Design. It would pity a Man's Heart to see, how hard such Men are put to it for Diversion, and what a burden Time is to them; and how solicitous they are to devise ways, not to spend it, but to squander it away. For their great grievance is Consideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon any thing that is serious. They hurry from one Vanity and Folly to another; and plunge themselves into drink, not to quench their Thirst, but their Guilt: and are beholding to every vain Man, and to every trifling Occasion, that can but help to take Time off their Hands, wretched and inconsiderate Men! who have so vast a Work before them, the happiness of all Eternity to take care of, and provide for, and yet are at a loss how to employ their Time! So that Irreligion and Vice makes Life an extravagant and unnatural Thing, because it perverts and overthrows the natural course and order of Things. For Instance; according to Nature Men labour to get an Estate, to free themselves from Temptations to Rapine and Injury; and that they may have wherewithal to supply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous Man heaps up Riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them; and starves himself in the midst of Plenty, and most unnaturally cheats and robs himself of that which is his own; and makes a hard shift to be as poor and miserable with a great Estate, as any Man can be without it. According to the design of Nature, Men should eat and drink that they may live; but the voluptuous Man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all sensual Enjoyments designs Pleasure, which may certainly be had within the limits of Vertue: But Vice rashly

rashly pursues Pleasure into the Enemies Quarters; and never stops, till the Sinner be surrounded and seized upon by Pain and Torment.

So that take away God and Religion, and Men live to no Purpose; without proposing any worthy and considerable end of Life to themselves. Whereas the fear of God, and the care of our Immortal Souls, fixeth us upon one great Design, to which our whole Life, and all the Actions of it are ultimately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (saith *Lactantius*) *ibi vita, & omnis actus, ad unum caput, & ad unum summam refertur*; When we acknowledge God as the Author of our Being, as our Sovereign, and our Judge, our End and our Happiness is then fixed; and we can have but one reasonable Design, and that is, by endeavouring to please God, to gain his Favour and Protection in this World, and to arrive at the blissful Enjoyment of him in the other: *In whose presence is fulness of Joy; and at whose right Hand are pleasures for evermore.* To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIX.

Of the Difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits.

Jeremiah xiii. 23.

Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.

Considering the great Difficulty of reclaiming those who are far gone in an evil Course, it is no more than needs to use all sorts of Arguments to this purpose: From the Consideration of the evil of Sin, and of the Goodness of God, and his wonderful Patience and Long-suffering towards us in the midst of our infinite Provocations: From his great Mercy and Pity declared to us in all those gracious Means and Methods which he useth for our Recovery: And from his readiness and forwardness after all our Rebellions to receive us upon our Repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us, as if we had never offended him: And from the final Issue and Event of a wicked Life, the dismal and endless Miseries of another World, into which we shall inevitably fall, except we repent in time, and return to a better mind: And lastly, from the danger of being hardened in an evil Course, past all remedy and hopes of Repentance.

And yet I am very sensible that to discourse to Men of the Impossibility, or at least the extream Difficulty of rescuing themselves out of this miserable State, seems to be an odd and cross kind of Argument, and more apt to drive People to Despair, than to gain them to Repentance.

But since the Spirit of God is pleased to make use of it to this purpose, we may safely rely upon infinite Wisdom for the fitness of it to awaken Sinners to a sense of their Condition, in order to their Recovery. For here in the Text, after terrible Threatnings of Captivity and Desolation to the People of the Jews, who were extreamly wicked and degenerate, through an universal depravation of Manners in all Ranks of Men from the highest to the lowest, so that they seemed to stand upon the brink of Ruine, and to be fatally devoted to it; to add to the terrour and force of these Threatnings, God by his Prophet represents to them the infinite danger and extream difficulty of their Case, to see if he could startle them by telling them into what a desperate Condition they had plunged themselves; being by a long custom of sinning so far engaged in an evil Course, that they had almost cut off themselves from a possibility of retreat; so that the difficulty of their change seem'd next to a natural Impossibility. *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.*

The Expression is very high, and it is to be hoped somewhat Hyperbolic, and above the just meaning of the Words. Which are, I think, only de-

designed to signifie to us the extream difficulty of making this Change; which is therefore resembled to a natural Impossibility, as coming very near it, tho' not altogether up to it.

And that this Expression is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by considering some other like Passages of Scripture. As, where our Saviour compares the difficulty of a rich Man's Salvation to that which is naturally impossible, viz. to a *Camel's passing through the Eye of a Needle*: Nay, he pitcheth his Expression higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal, but of greater Difficulty; *I say, unto you, it is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* And yet when he comes to explain this to his Disciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, *how hard is it for those that have Riches to be saved?* and that it was not absolutely impossible, but speaking according to human Probability: *with Men this is impossible, but not with God.*

And thus also it is reasonable to understand that severe Passage of the Apostle, *Heb 6. 4. It is impossible for them that were once enlightned, if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. It is impossible,* that is, it is very difficult.

In like manner we are to understand this high Expression in the Text, *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil;* that is, this moral change of Men, settled and fixed in bad habits, is almost as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained *two* things will properly fall under our consideration.

First, The great difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits, or of changing a bad Course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it.

Secondly, Notwithstanding the great difficulty of the Thing, what ground of Hope and Encouragement there is left that it may be done. So that notwithstanding the appearing harshness of the Text, the result of my Discourse will be, not to discourage any, how bad soever, from attempting this Change, but to put them upon it, and to perswade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may seem to be one of the strongest Objections against all Endeavours of Men very bad, to become better.

I. *First*, The great difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits, or of changing a bad Course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it. And this difficulty ariseth, partly from the general nature of Habits indifferently considered whether they be good, or bad, or indifferent; partly, from the particular Nature of evil and vicious Habits; and partly, from the natural and judicial Consequences of a great Progress and long continuance in an Evil Course. By the Consideration of these three Particulars, the extreme difficulty of this Change, together with the true Causes and Reasons of it, will fully appear.

1. If we consider the nature of all Habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The Custom and frequent Practice of any thing begets in us a faculty and easiness in doing it. It bends the Powers of our Soul, and turns the Stream and Current of our Animal Spirits such a way, and gives all our Faculties a tendency and pliability to such a sort of Actions. And when we have long stood bent one way, we grow settled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be restored to

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our former State and Condition. For the perfection of any Habit, whether good or bad, induceth a kind of necessity of acting accordingly. A rooted Habit becomes a governing Principle, and bears almost an equal sway in us with that which is Natural. It is a kind of a new Nature superinduced, and even as hard to be expelled, as some things which are primitively and originally natural. When we bend a thing at first it will endeavour to restore it self; but it may be held bent so long till it will continue so of it self, and grow crooked; and then it may require more force and violence to reduce it to its former straightness, than we used to make it crooked at first. This is the nature of all Habits, the farther we proceed, the more we are confirmed in them: And that which at first we did voluntarily, by degrees becomes so natural and necessary, that it is almost impossible for us to do otherwise. This is plainly seen in the experience of every Day, in things good and bad, both in lesser and greater Matters.

2. This difficulty ariseth more especially from the particular Nature of evil and vicious Habits. These, because they are suitable to our corrupt Nature, and conspire with the Inclinations of it, are likely to be of a much quicker growth and improvement, and in a shorter space, and with less care and endeavour, to arrive at Maturity and Strength, than the Habits of Grace and Goodness. Considering the Propension of our depraved Nature, the Progress of Vertue and Goodness is up the Hill, in which we not only move hardly and heavily, but are easily roll'd back: but by Wickedness and Vice we move downwards; which, as it is much quicker and easier, so it is harder for us to stop in that course, and infinitely more difficult to return from it.

Not but that at first a Sinner hath some considerable Checks and Restraints upon him, and meets with several Rubs and Difficulties in his way; the Shame and Unreasonableness of his Vices, and the trouble and disquiet which they create to him: But he breaks loose from these Restraints, and gets over these Difficulties by degrees: and the faster and farther he advanceth in an evil Course, the less trouble still they give him, till at last they almost quite lose their Force, and give him little or no Disturbance.

Shame also is a great restraint upon Sinners at first, but that soon falls off: and when Men have once lost their Innocence, their Modesty is not like to be long troublesome to them. For Impudence comes on with Vice, and grows up with it. Lesser Vices do not banish all Shame and Modesty, but great and abominable Crimes harden Mens foreheads and make them shameless. *Were they ashamed (saith the Prophet) when they committed Abomination? nay they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.* When Men have the Heart to do a very bad Thing, they seldom want the Face to bear it out.

And as for the *Unreasonableness* of Vice, though nothing in the World be more evident to a free and impartial Judgment, and the Sinner himself discerns it clearly enough at his first setting out in a wicked Course:

—*Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora sequor.*

He offends against the Light of his own Mind, and does wickedly when he knows better: yet after he hath continued for some time in this Course, and is heartily engaged in it, his foolish Heart is darken'd, and the Notions of Good and Evil are obscured and confounded, and things appear to him in a false and imperfect Light: His Lusts do at once blind and byass his Understanding; and his Judgment by degrees goes over to his Inclinations; and

and he cannot think that there should be so much reason against those things for which he hath so strong an Affection. He is now engaged in a Party, and factiously concerned to maintain it, and to make the best of it; and to that end, he bends all his Wits to advance such Principles as are fittest to justify his wicked Practices; and in all Debates plainly favours that side of the Question which will give the greatest Countenance and Encouragement to them. When Men are corrupt, and do abominable Works, they say in their Hearts there is no God; that is, they would fain think so. And every thing serves for an Argument to a willing Mind; and every little Objection appears strong and considerable, which makes against that which Men are loth should be true.

Not that any Man ever satisfied himself in the Principles of Infidelity, or was able to arrive to a steady and unshaken persuasion of the truth of them, so as not vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. However, by this means many Men, thought they cannot fully comfort, yet they make a shift to cheat themselves; to still their Consciences, and lay them asleep for a time, so as not to receive any great and frequent disturbance in their Course, from the checks and rebukes of their own Minds. And when these Restraints are removed, the work of Iniquity goes on a-main, being favoured both by Wind and Tide.

3. The difficulty of this change ariseth likewise from the natural and judicial Consequences of a great progress and long continuance in an evil Course. My meaning is, that inveterate evil Habits do partly from their own Nature, and partly from the just Judgment and Permission of God, put Men under several Disadvantages of moving effectually towards their own Recovery.

By a long custom of finning Men's Consciences grow brawny, and *seared as it were with a hot Iron*; and by being often trampled upon they become hard as the beaten Road. So that unless it be upon some extraordinary Occasion, they are seldom awakened to a sense of their Guilt. And when Mens Hearts are thus hard, the best Counsels make but little impression upon them. For they are steel'd against Reproof, and impenetrable to good Advice; which is therefore seldom offer'd to them, even by those that wish them well, because they know it to be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It requires a great deal of good Nature in a very bad Man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his Faults.

Besides, that habitual Wickedness is naturally apt to banish Consideration, to weaken our Resolution, and to discourage our Hopes both of God's Grace and Assistance, and of his Mercy and Forgiveness, which are the best means and encouragement to Repentance.

Sin is a great Enemy to *Consideration*; and especially when Men are deeply plunged into it, their Condition is so very bad, that they are loth to think of it, and to search into it. A vicious Man is a very deformed sight, and to none more than to himself; and therefore he loves to turn his Eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himself. He is afraid to be alone, lest his own Mind should arrest him, and his Conscience should take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own Thoughts meet with him, and he cannot avoid Consideration, he is ready to say as *Abab* did to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O my Enemy!* and is as glad to shake it off, as a Man is to get rid of a Creditor, whom because he knows not how to satisfy, he cares not to speak with him. Consideration is the great troubler and disturber of Men in an evil Course, because it would represent to them the plain truth of their Case; and

and therefore they do all they can to keep it off, as those who have improvidently managed their Affairs, and been ill husbands of their Estates, are loth to make up their Accounts, lest by that means they should be forced to understand the worst of their Condition.

Or if Consideration happen to take them at an Advantage, and they are so hard prest by it, that they cannot escape the sight of their own Condition, yet they find themselves so miserably entangled and hamper'd in an evil Course, and bound so fast in the Chains of their own Wickedness, that they know not how to get loose. Sin is the saddest slavery in the World; it breaks and sinks Mens Spirits, and makes them so base and servile, that they have not the courage to rescue themselves. No sort of Slaves are so poor spirited, as they that are in Bondage to their Lusts. Their Power is gone, or if they have any left, they have not the heart to make use of it. And though they see and feel their Misery, yet they chuse rather to sit down in it, and tamely to submit to it, than to make any resolute Attempt for their Liberty. What the Prophet says of *Whoredom and Wine*, is proportionably true of other Vices, *they take away the Heart*. Every Lust that we entertain deals with us as *Dalilah* did with *Sampson*, not only robs us of our Strength, but leaves us fast bound: So that if at any time we be awakened to a sense of our Condition, and try to rescue our selves from it, we find that *our strength is departed from us*, and that we are not able to break loose.

And as long custom and continuance in Sin deprives us of our Strength, so it discourageth our Hopes, both of God's Grace and Assistance, and of his Mercy and Forgiveness. For why should Men expect the continuance of that Grace which they have so often received in vain? After so many Provocations, how can we look the offended Majesty of God in the Face? how can we lift up our Eyes to Heaven with any hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness there? Despair doth almost naturally spring from an evil Conscience; and when Men are thoroughly awakened to a sense of Sin, and of the infinite Evil of it, as they cannot easily forgive themselves, so they can hardly believe that there is goodness enough any where to forgive them.

But besides these Disadvantages, which are natural and consequent upon a vicious Course; by the just Judgment of God, his Spirit is withdrawn from them, and they are given up to their own Hearts Lusts, to commit all Iniquity with greediness. And then there is hardly any thing left, either to restrain them in their evil Course, or to recover them out of it.

And not only so, but by the just permission of God, as Men grow worse and more wicked, the Devil hath a nearer Access to them, and a more immediate Power over them. So the *Scripture* tells us, that wicked Men are *led captive by Satan at his pleasure*, and that the *evil one works and acts in the Children of Disobedience*: They are as it were possessed and inspired by him. And what can be expected from this cruel and malicious Enemy of Mankind, but that he will continually be pushing them on from one Wickedness to another, till he derive them first into Despair, and then, if God permit him, into eternal Perdition?

And what a forlorn State is this? when Men are thus forsaken of God, and left without check, blindly and headily to follow the sway of their own Tempers, and the bent of their own corrupt Hearts? when they are continually exposed to Temptations, strongly inviting them to Evil; and God lets the Devil loose upon them to manage those Temptations with his utmost Skill, and to practise all his Arts and Wiles upon them? In these Circumstances Men almost infallibly run into Sin, as sure as Men wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in slippery places, and of being entangled when

when they continually walk in the midst of Snares cunningly laid for them. It is not in Men thus disabled and entangled, to order their own Steps, and to restrain their Inclinations and Passions in the presence of a powerful Temptation. At the best, we need God's direction to guide us, his continual Grace to uphold us, and to guard and preserve us from Evil; and much more do we stand in need of it when we have brought our selves into these wretched Circumstances; but then alas! how little reason have we to hope for it?

Blind and miserable Men! that in despite of all the merciful Warnings of God's Word and Providence, will run themselves into this desperate State, and never think of returning to a better Mind, till their retreat is difficult almost to an Impossibility. I proceed to the

II. Head of my Discourse, which was to shew that the Case of these Persons, though it be extremely difficult, is not quite desperate; but after all, there is some ground of Hope and Encouragement left, that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to Goodness. Indeed humanely speaking, and according to all Appearance and Probability, the thing seems to be very hopeless, and next to an Impossibility; but yet what our *Saviour* says concerning the difficulty of a rich Man's Salvation, will reach also to this Case, though much more difficult; *those things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.* II.

And this will appear, if we consider that even in the worst of Men there is something left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to Consideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous Resolution of a better Course: And this accompanied with a powerful Assistance of God's Grace, which when sincerely sought is never to be despaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greatest of Sinners.

1. There is left, even in the worst of Men, a natural Sense of the Evil and Unreasonableness of Sin; which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in Human Nature. For tho' the Habits of great Vices are very apt to harden and stupify Men, so that they have seldom a just sense of their evil Ways, yet these Persons are sometimes under strong Convictions, and their Consciences do severely check and rebuke them for their Faults. They are also, by fits, under great apprehension of the danger of their Condition, and that the course which they are in, if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruine them at last: Especially, when their Consciences are thoroughly awakened, by some great Affliction, or the near approach of Death, and a lively Sense of another World. And the apprehension of a mighty Danger will make Men to look about them, and to use the best means to avoid it.

2. Very bad Men when they have any thoughts of becoming better, are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's Grace and Mercy. For though they find all the Causes and Reasons of Despair in themselves, yet the Consideration of the boundless Goodness and Compassions of God (how undeserved soever on their part) is apt to kindle some sparks of Hope, even in the most desponding Mind. His wonderful Patience, in the midst of our manifold Provocations, cannot but be a good sign to us, that he hath no mind that we should perish, but rather that we should come to Repentance; and if we do repent, we are assured by his Promise, that we shall be forgiven. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Who knows what Men thoroughly roused and startled may resolve, and do? And a mighty Resolution will break through Difficulties which seem insuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful Creatures; yet Nature

when it is mightily irritated and stirr'd will do strange things. The Resolutions of Men upon the brink of Despair, have been of an incredible force: and the Soul of Man in nothing more discovers its Divine Power and Original, than in that Spring which is in it whereby it recovers it self when it is mightily urged and prest. There is a sort of Resolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can resist it or stand before it.

Of this there have been great Instances in several kinds. Some by an obstinate Resolution, and taking incredible Pains with themselves, have mastered great natural Vices and Defects. A *Socrates* and *Demosthenes*, who almost exceeded all Mankind in those two things for which by Nature they seemed to be least made, and most unfit. One, in governing of his Passions, and the other in the mighty Force and Power of his Eloquence.

Some, that by Intemperance have brought themselves to a Dropsie, which hath just set them upon the brink of the Grave, by a bold and steady Purpose to abstain wholly from Drink for a long time together, have rescued themselves from the Jaws of Death.

Some that had almost ruined themselves by a careless and dissolute Life, and having run themselves out of their Estates into Debt, and being cast into Prison, have there taken up a manly Resolution to retrieve and recover themselves; and by the indefatigable Labour and Study of some years, in that uncomfortable retreat, have mastered the Knowledge and Skill of one of the most difficult Professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And some, in the full career of a wicked Course, have by a sudden Thought and Resolution, raised in them and assisted by a mighty Grace of God, taken up presently and made an immediate change from great Wickedness and Impiety of Life, to a very exemplary degree of Goodness and Vertue.

The two great encouragements to Vertue which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars were these; and they were worthy of so great a Philosopher; *First, Chuse always the best course of Life, and Custom will soon make it the most pleasant.* The other was this, that *Power and Necessity are Neighbours, and never dwell far from one another.* When Men are prest by a great Necessity, when Nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost, Men discover in themselves a Power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do.

4. The Grace and Assistance of God when sincerely sought, is never to be despaired of. So that if we do but heartily and in good earnest resolve upon a better Course, and implore the help of God's Grace to this Purpose, no degree of it that is necessary shall be wanting to us. And here is our chief Ground of Hope. For we are *weak and unstable as Water*; and when we have taken up good Resolutions do easily start from them. So that fresh Supplies, and a continued Assistance of God's Grace is necessary to keep up the first warmth and vigour of our Resolutions, till they prove Effectual and Victorious. And this Grace God hath promised he will not deny to us, when we are thus disposed for it; that he *will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised Reed, until he bring forth Judgment unto Victory.*

All that now remains is to apply this to our selves: And we are all concerned in it: For we shall all find our selves comprehended under one of these three Heads: Either we are of the Number of those few happy Persons, who by the Influence and Advantage of a good Education were never engaged

gaged in a bad Course: Or, of those who have been drawn into Vice, but are not yet far gone in it: Or, of those who have been long accustomed to an evil Course, and are grown old and stiff in it.

The first of these have great cause to thank God for this singular Felicity, that they were never ensnared and intangled in Vicious Habits, that they have not had the trial of their own Weakness under this miserable Slavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own Power, to have lost their Liberty and the Government of themselves. When we hear of the miserable servitude of the poor Christians in *Turkey*, we are apt, as there is great reason, to pity them, and to think what a Blessing of God it is to us that we are not in their Condition: And yet *that* Slavery is not comparable to *this*, either for the sad Nature, or the dismal *Consequences* of it; or for the difficulty of being released from it. And let such Persons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil Course, preserve their Innocency with great tenderness and care, as the greatest Jewel in the World. No Man knows what he does, and what a Foundation of Trouble he lays to himself, when he forfeits his Innocency, and breaks the Peace of his own Mind; when he yields to a Temptation, and makes the first Step into a bad Course. He little thinks whither his Lusts may hurry him, and what a Monster they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Those who have been seduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil Course, let them make a speedy Retreat, lest they put it for ever out of their power to return. Perhaps their Feet only are yet ensnared, but their Hands are at liberty, and they have some Power left, whereby with an ordinary Grace of God they may loose and rescue themselves. But after a while their Hands may be manacled, and all their Power may be gone; and when they are thus *bound Hand and Foot*, they are just prepared, and in danger every Moment, *to be cast into utter Darknes*.

3. As for those, who are gone very far, and are grown old in Vice, who can forbear to lament over them? for they are a sad Spectacle indeed, and the truest object of Pity in the World. And yet, *their* Recovery is not utterly to be despaired of; for *with God it is possible*. The Spirit of God, which hath withdrawn himself, or rather hath been driven away by them, may yet be persuaded to return, and to undertake them once more, if they would but seriously resolve upon a Change, and heartily beg God's Assistance to that Purpose. If we would take up a mighty Resolution, we might hope that God would afford a miraculous Grace to second it, and make it effectual to our Recovery. Even in this perverse and degenerate Age in which we live, God hath not been wanting to give some miraculous Instances of his Grace and Mercy to Sinners, and those perhaps equal to any of those we meet with in Scripture, of *Manasses*, or *Mary Magdalen*, or the *Penitent Thief*; both for the Greatness of the Offenders, and the Miracle of their Change: To the end that none might despair, and for want of the Encouragement of an Example equal to their own Case, be disheartened from so noble an Enterprise. I am loth to put you in mind how bad some have been, who yet have been *snatched as Firebrands out of the Fire*; and that in so strange a manner, that it would even amaze a Man to think of the wonder of their Recovery: those who have sunk themselves into the very depth of Infidelity and Wickedness, have by a mighty Hand and out-stretched Arm of God been pluckt out of this horrible Pit. And will we still stand it out with God, when such great Leaders have given up the Cause, and have surrendered and yielded up themselves willing Captives to the Grace of God? that Omnipotent

potent grace of God, which can easily subdue the stoutest Heart of Man, by letting in so strong a Light upon our Minds, and pouring such terrible Convictions into our Consciences, that we can find no ease but in turning to God.

I hope there are none here so bad, as to need all the encouragement to Repentance, which such Examples might give them: Encouragement I say to Repentance: for surely these Examples can encourage no Man to venture any farther in a wicked Course: they are so very rare, and like the Instances of those who have been brought back to Life after the Sentence of Death seemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps some will not believe that there have been such Examples; or if they have, they impute all this either to a disturbed Imagination, or to the faint and low Spirits of Men under great bodily Weakness, or to their natural Cowardize and Fear; or to I know not what foolish and fantastical Design of compleating and finishing a wicked Life with an hypocritical Death. Nothing surely is easier than to put some bad Construction upon the best Things, and so slur even Repentance it self, and almost dash it out of Countenance by some bold, and perhaps witty saying about it. But oh that Men were wise; oh that Men were wise! that they understood, and would consider their latter End! Come, let us neither trifle, nor dissemble in this matter; I dare say every Man's Conscience is convinced, that they who have led very ill Lives, have so much reason for Repentance, that we may easily believe it to be real. However, of all things in the World, let us not make a mock of Repentance; that which must be our last Sanctuary and Refuge, and which we must all come to before we die, or *it had been better for us we had never been born.* Therefore, *let my Counsel be acceptable unto you, break off your sins by Repentance, and your iniquities by Righteousness:* And that instantly, and without delay; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* If we have been enslaved but a little to a vicious Course, we shall find it a Task difficult enough to assert our own Liberty, to *break these Bonds in sunder, and to cast these Cords from us:* But if we have been long under this Bondage, we have done so much to undo our selves, and to make our Case desperate, that it is God's infinite Mercy to us that there is yet Hope. Therefore, *give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause Darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark Mountains, and while you look for Light, he turn it into Darkness and the shadow of Death.* I will conclude with that encouraging Invitation, even to the greatest of Sinners to Repentance, from the Mouth of God himself, *Isa. 55. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your Soul shall live: seek the Lord while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

To him let us apply our selves, and humbly beseech him, *who is mighty to save,* that he would stretch forth the right hand of his Power for our deliverance, from this miserable and cruel bondage of our Lusts: and that *as the rain cometh down from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the Earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud;* so he would grant that *his word may not return void, but accomplish his pleasure, and prosper in the thing to which he sent it;* For his Mercy sake in Jesus Christ, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N XXX.

The Necessity of the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

Matthew xxiii. 13.

Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men; and ye neither go in your selves, neither suffer ye them that are entring to go in.

TH E *Scribes* so often mentioned in the *Gospel*, were the great Doctors among the *Jews*, the Teachers and Interpreters of the Law of God. And because many of them were of the Sect of the *Pharisees*, which above all others pretended to Skill and Knowledge in the Law, therefore it is that our blessed *Saviour* does so often put the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* together. And these were the Men of chief Authority in the *Jewish Church*; who equalled their own unwritten Word and Traditions with the Law of God: Nay, our *Saviour* tells us, *they made all the Commandments of God of none effect by their Traditions*. They did in effect assume to themselves *Infallibility*; and all that opposed and contradicted them, they branded with the odious Name of *Hereticks*. Against these our *Saviour* denounceth this Woe here in the *Text*, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men, &c.*

All the difficulty in the Words, is what is here meant by *shutting up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*: St. *Luke* expresth it more plainly, *Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge, ye entred not in your selves, and them that were entring in, ye hindered*. By putting these two Expressions together, we shall the more easily come at the meaning of the *Text*, *Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge, and have shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*. This Metaphor of the *Key of Knowledge*, is undoubtedly an Allusion to that known Custom among the *Jews* in the admission of their Doctors. For to whomsoever they gave Authority to interpret the Law and the Prophets, they were solemnly admitted into that Office by delivering to them a *Key* and a *Table-Book*. So that by the *Key of Knowledge*, is here meant the Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures; and by *taking away the Key of Knowledge*, not only that they arrogated to themselves alone the Understanding of the Scriptures, but likewise that they had conveyed away this *Key of Knowledge*, and as it were, hid it out of the way, neither using it themselves as they ought, nor suffering others to make use of it.

And thus they *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*; which is very fitly said of those who have locked the Door against them that were going in, and have taken away the *Key*. By all which it appears, that the plain meaning of our *Saviour* in these Metaphorical Expressions is, that the *Scribes* and Teachers of the Law, under a pretence of interpreting the Scriptures, had perverted

perverted them and kept the true Knowledge of them from the People: Especially those Prophecies of the *Old Testament* which concerned the *Messias*. And by this means the Kingdom of Heaven was shut against Men: And they not only rejected the Truth themselves, but by keeping Men in Ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures, they hindered many from embracing our *Saviour's* Doctrine, and entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it.

Having thus explained the Words, I shall from the main Scope and Design of them observe to you these two Things.

1. The Necessity of the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures in order to our Eternal Salvation. It is called by our *Saviour* *the Key of Knowledge*, that which lets Men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The great and inexcusable Fault of those who deprive the People of the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. They *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their Eternal Salvation; and therefore our *Saviour* denounceth so heavy a Woe against them.

I shall speak briefly to these two *Observations*; and then apply them to those who are principally concerned in them.

1. *First*, I observe hence the Necessity of the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in order to our Eternal Salvation. This is by our *Saviour* called *the Key of Knowledge*, that which lets Men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Knowledge is necessary to Religion: It is necessary to the Being of it; and necessary to the Life and Practice of it. *Without Faith* (says the *Apostle*) *it is impossible to please God*: Because Faith is an Act of the Understanding, and does necessarily suppose some Knowledge and Apprehension of what we believe. To all Acts of Religion there is necessarily required some Act of the Understanding; so that without Knowledge there can be no Devotion in the Service of God, no Obedience to his Laws. Religion begins in the Understanding, and from thence descends upon the Heart and Life. *If ye know these things* (says our *Saviour*) *happy are ye if ye do them*. We must first know God, before we can worship him; and understand what is his Will, before we can do it.

This is so very evident, that one would think there needed no Discourse about it. And yet there are some in the World that cry up Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion. And to shew that we do not wrong them in this Matter, Mr. *Rushworth* in his *Dialogues* (a Book in great vogue among the *Papists* here in *England*) does expressly reckon up Ignorance among the *Parents of Religion*. And can any thing be said more absurdly, and more to the disparagement of Religion, than to derive the Pedigree of the most excellent thing in the World, from so obscure and ignoble an Original; and to make that which the Scripture calls *the beginning of Wisdom*, and *the excellency of Knowledge*, to be the Off-spring of Ignorance, and a Child of Darkness? Ignorance indeed may be the cause of Wonder and Admiration, and the Mother of Folly and Superstition: But surely Religion is of a nobler Extraction, and is the Issue and Result of the best Wisdom and Knowledge; and descends from above, from the Giver of every good and perfect Gift, even the Father of Lights.

And as Knowledge in general is necessary to Religion, so more particularly the Knowledge of the *Holy Scriptures* is necessary to our Eternal Salvation. Because these are the great and standing Revelation of God to Mankind; wherein the Nature of God, and his Will concerning our Duty, and the Terms and Conditions of our Eternal Happiness in another World are fully and plainly declared to us.

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The Scriptures are the Word of God ; and from whence can we learn the Will of God so well as from his own Mouth? They are the great Instrument of our Salvation ; and should not every Man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly instruct him what he must believe, and what he must do that he may be saved? This is the Testimony which the Scriptures gives of it self, that it is *able to make Men wise unto Salvation* : And is it not very fit that every Man should have this Wisdom, and in order thereunto the free use of that *Book* from whence this Wisdom is to be learned?

II. *Secondly*, I observe the great and inexcusable Fault of those who keep Men in Ignorance of Religion, and take away from them so excellent and necessary a means of Divine Knowledge as the *Holy Scriptures* are. This our Saviour calls *taking away the Key of Knowledge, and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*. That is, doing what in them lies to render it impossible for Men to be saved. For this he denounceth a terrible *Woe* against the Teachers of the *Jewish Church* : Though they did not proceed so far as to deprive Men of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*, but only of the right Knowledge and Understanding of them. This alone is a horrible Impiety, to lead Men into a false Sense and Interpretation of Scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to stop Knowledge at the very Fountain-head ; and not only to lead Men into Errour, but to take away from them all possibility of rectifying their Mistakes. And can there be a greater Sacrilege, than to rob Men of the Word of God, the best means in the World of acquainting them with the Will of God and their Duty, and the way to Eternal Happiness? To keep the People in Ignorance of that which is necessary to save them, is to *judge them unworthy of Eternal Life*, and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciously to contrive the Eternal Ruin and Destruction of their Souls.

To lock up the *Scriptures* and the *Service of God* from the People in an unknown Tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid Men to know God and to serve him ; to render them incapable of knowing what *is the good and acceptable Will of God* ; of joyning in his Worship, or performing any part of it, or receiving any Benefit or Edification from it? And what is, if this be not, to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men? This is so outrageous a cruelty to the Souls of Men, that it is not to be excused upon any pretence whatsoever : This is to take the surest and most effectual way in the World to *destroy those for whom Christ died*, and directly to thwart the great Design of God our Saviour, who would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the *Knowledge of the Truth*. Men may miscarry with their Knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of it.

The best things in the World have their Inconveniencies attending them, and are liable to be abused ; but surely Men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abusing their Knowledge, or for the prevention of any other Inconvenience whatsoever. Besides, this is to cross the very end of the *Scriptures*, and the design of God in inspiring Men to write them. Can any Man think that God should send this great Light of his Word into the World, for the Priests to *hide it under a Bushel* ; and not rather that it should be set up to the greatest Advantage for the enlightening of the World? St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 15. 4. That whatsoever things were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* And *2 Tim. 3. 16. That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God ; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* And if the *Scriptures* were written for these Ends, can any Man have the
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face to pretend that they do not concern the People as well as their Teachers? Nay St. Paul expressly tells the Church of Rome, that they were written for their Learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make use of them. Are the *Scriptures* so useful and profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Instruction in Righteousness? and why may they not be used by the People for those ends for which they were given? 'Tis true indeed they are fit for the most knowing and learned, and sufficient to make *the Man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work* (as the *Apostle* there tells us.) But does this exclude their being profitable also to the People; who may reasonably be presumed to stand much more in need of all means and helps of Instruction than their Teachers? And though there be many Difficulties and Obscurities in the *Scriptures*, enough to exercise the Skill and Wit of the Learned, yet they are not therefore either useless or dangerous to the People. The Ancient *Fathers* of the Church were of another Mind. St. *Chrysostom* tells us, that "Whatever Things are necessary, are manifest in the *Scriptures*. And St. *Austin*, that all Things are plain in the *Scripture*, "which concern Faith and a good Life; and that those Things which are necessary to the Salvation of Men, are not so hard to be come at, but that as to those Things which the *Scripture* plainly contains, it speaks "without disguise like a familiar Friend to the Heart of the Learned and Unlearned. And upon these and such like Considerations, the *Fathers* did every-where in their *Orations* and *Homilies* charge and exhort the People to be conversant in the Holy *Scriptures*, to read them daily and diligently and attentively. And I challenge our *Adversaries* to shew me where any of the Ancient *Fathers* do discourage the People from reading the *Scriptures*, much less forbid them so to do. So that they who do it now have no Cloak for their Sin: And they who pretend so confidently to *Antiquity* in other Cases, are by the Evidence of Truth forced to acknowledge that it is against them in this. Though they have ten thousand *Schoolmen* on their side, yet have they not one Father, not the least pretence of *Scripture*, or rag of *Antiquity* to cover their nakedness in this Point.

With great reason then does our *Saviour* denounce so heavy a *Woe* against such Teachers. Of old in the like case God by his *Prophet* severely threatens the Priests of the *Jewish Church*, for not instructing the People in the Knowledge of God, *Hosea* 4. 6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; thou shalt be no more a Priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy Children.* God, you see, lays the ruine of so many Souls at their Doors, and will require their Blood at their Hands. So many as perish for want of Knowledge, and eternally miscarry by being deprived of the necessary means of Salvation, their Destruction shall be charged upon those who have taken away the Key of Knowledge, and shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men.

And it is just with God to punish such Persons, not only as the Occasion, but as the Authors of their Ruine. For who can judge otherwise, but that they who deprive Men of the necessary means to any End, do purposely design to hinder them of attaining that End? And whatever may be pretended in this Case; to deprive Men of the Holy *Scriptures*, and to keep them ignorant of the Service of God, and yet while they do so, to make a shew of an earnest desire of their Salvation, is just such a Mockery, as if one of you that is a Master should tell his Prentice, how much you desire he should thrive in the World, and be a rich Man, but all the while keep him ignorant of his Trade in order to his being rich; and with the strictest care imaginable conceals from him the best means of Learning, that whereby alone

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he is likely to thrive and get an Estate. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites.*

By what hath been discoursed upon this Argument, you will easily perceive where the Application is like to fall. For the *Wo* denounced by our Saviour here in the *Text* against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, falls every whit as heavy upon the *Pastors* and *Teachers* of the *Roman Church*. They have taken away the *Key of Knowledge* with a witness; not only depriving the People of the right understanding of the *Scriptures*, but of the very use of them: As if they were so afraid they should understand them, that they dare not suffer them so much as to be acquainted with them.

This Tyranny that Church hath exercised over those of her Communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees: For as by the Inundation of *Barbarous Nations* upon the *Roman Empire* the *Romans* lost their Language by degrees, so the Governours of that Church still kept up the *Scriptures* and the Service of God in the *Latin Tongue*; which at last was wholly unknown to the Common People. And about the *ninth* and *tenth Centuries*, when by the general consent of all their own *Historians* gross darkness and ignorance covered this part of the World, the *Pope* and the *Priests* took away the *Key of Knowledge*, and did (as I may so say) put it under the Door for several Ages; till the *Reformation* fetched it out again, and rubbed off the rust of it.

And I profess seriously that hardly any thing in the World, was ever to me more astonishing, than this uncharitable and cruel usage of the People in the Church of *Rome*. And I cannot tell which to wonder at most, the insolence of their Governours in imposing upon Men this senseless way of serving God, or the patience shall I call it, or rather stupidity of the People in enduring to be so intolerably abused. Why should reasonable Creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the Will of God; and as if that which every Man ought to do, were not fit for every Man to know: As if the Common People had only Bodies to be present at the Service of God, but no Souls; or as if they were all distracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them.

But to speak more distinctly. There are *two* things we charge them withal, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick Service of God in an unknown Tongue; and depriving the People of the use of the *Scriptures*. And I shall first tell you what we have to say against these things, and then consider what they pretend for them.

1. As for their performing the Service of God in a Tongue unknown to the People. And I begin with *St. Paul*, who in his first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians* hath a whole Chapter on purpose to shew the unreasonableness of this thing, and how contrary it is to the Edification of *Christians*. His discourse is so plain and so well known, that I shall not particularly insist upon it. *Erasmus*, in his *Annotations* upon this Chapter, breaks out, (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the Church of *Rome* in his time. *Hac in re mirum quam mutata sit Ecclesiae consuetudo*: "It is wonderful (says he) how the Custom of the Church is altered in this matter. *St. Paul* had rather speak five Words with understanding, and so as to teach others, than ten thousand in an unknown Tongue. Why does the Church doubt to follow so great an Authority, or rather how dares she to dissent from it?

As for the practice of the ancient Church let *Origen* bear witness. "The *Grecians* (saith he) in their Prayers use the *Greek*, and the *Romans* the *Latin Tongue*; and so every one according to his Language prayeth unto God, and praiseth him as he is able.

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And not only in *Origen's* time, but for more than the first six hundred years, the Service of God was always performed in a known Tongue. And this the learned Men of their own Church do not deny. And Cardinal *Cajetan* (as *Cassander* tells us) said it was much better this Custom were restored; and being reproved for saying so, he said he learned it from *St. Paul*. And *Bellarmino* himself confesseth that the *Armenians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Russians*, and others do use their own Language in their Liturgies at this day.

But it is otherwise now in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been for several Ages. And it seems they lay great stress upon it, not only as a thing of great Use, but Necessity. For Pope *Gregory* the VII. forbids the Prince of *Bobemia* to permit to the People the Celebration of divine Offices in the *Sclavonian* Tongue; and commands him to oppose them herein with all his Forces. It seems he thought it a cause worthy the fighting for: and that it were much better the People should be killed, than suffered to understand their Prayers.

But let us reason this matter a little calmly with them. Is it necessary for Men to understand any thing they do in Religion? And is not Prayer one of the most solemn parts of Religion? And why then should not Men understand their Prayers as well as any thing else they do in Religion? Is it good that People should understand their Private Prayers? that (we thank them) they allow, and why not Publick as well? Is there less of Religion in Publick Prayers? Is God less honoured by them? or are we not as capable of being edified and of having our Hearts and Affections moved and excited by them? Where then lies the difference? The more I consider it the more I am at a loss what tolerable reason any Man can give why People should not understand their Publick Devotions as well as their Private. If Men cannot heartily and devoutly pray alone, without understanding what they ask of God, no more (say I) can they heartily and devoutly join in the Publick Prayers which are made by the Priest without understanding what they are. If it be enough for the Priest to understand them, why should not the Priest only be present at them? unless the People do not meet to worship God, but only to wait upon the Priest. But by saying the Priest understands them, it seems it is better some Body should understand them than not; and why is not that which is good for the Priest good for the People?

So that the true state of the *Controversie* is, whether it be fit that the People should be edified in the Service of God; and whether it be fit the Church should order things contrary to edification? For it is plain that the Service of God in an unknown Tongue is useless and unprofitable to the People: Nay, it is evidently no Publick Service of God, when the Priest only understands it. For how can they be said to be *Publick Prayers* if the People do not joyn in them? And how can they joyn in that they do not understand? and to what purpose are *Lessons of Scripture* read, if People are to learn nothing by them? And how should they learn when they do not understand? This is as if one should pretend to teach a Man *Greek*, by reading in Lectures every day out of an *Arabick* and *Persian* Book, of which he understands not one syllable.

2. As to their depriving the People of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*. Our blessed *Saviour* exhorts the *Jews* to *search the Scriptures*; and *St. Paul* chargeth the Christians that *the Word of God should dwell richly in them*; And the ancient *Fathers* of the Church do most frequently and earnestly recommend to the People the reading and study of the Scriptures: How comes the case now to be so altered? Sure the Word of God is not changed; that certainly abides and continues the same for ever.

I shall by and by examin what the Church of *Rome* pretends in excuse of this Sacrilege. In the mean time I do not see what considerable Objections can be made against the People's reading of the Scriptures, which would not have held as well against the writing and publishing of them at first in a Language understood by the People: As the *Old Testament* was by the *Jews*, and the *Epistles* of the *Apostles* by the *Churches* to whom they were written, and the *Gospels* both by *Jews* and *Greeks*. Were there no difficulties and obscurities then in the *Scriptures*, capable of being wrested by the unstable and unlearned? Were not People then liable to errour, and was there no danger of Heresie in those Times? And yet these are their great Objections against putting the Scriptures into the hands of the People. Which is just like their arguing against giving the Cup to the Laity from the inconvenience of their *Beards*, lest some of the consecrated Wine should be spilt upon them: As if *Errours* and *Beards* were Inconveniencies lately sprung up in the World, and which Mankind were not liable to in the first Ages of Christianity.

But if there were the same Dangers and Inconveniencies in all Ages, this Reason makes against the publishing of the Scriptures to the People at first, as much as against permitting them the use of them now. And in truth all these Objections are against the Scripture it self: And that which the Church of *Rome* would find fault with if they durst, is that there should be any such Book in the World, and that it should be in any Bodies hands, learned or unlearned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are so capable of doing mischief with it as Men of Wit and Learning. So that at the bottom, if they would speak out, the Quarrel is against the Scriptures themselves. This is too evident by the counsel given to Pope *Julius* the III. by the Bishops met at *Bononia* to consult about the Establishment of the *Roman* See: Where among other things they gave this as their last advice, and as the greatest and weightiest of all, *That by all means as little of the Gospel as might be, especially in the Vulgar Tongue, should be read to the People; and that little which was in the Mass ought to be sufficient: neither should it be permitted to any mortal to read more. For so long (say they) as Men were contented with that little, all things went well with them; but quite otherwise, since more was commonly read.* And speaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable Testimony and Commendation of it; *This in short is that Book which, above all others, hath raised those tempests and whirlwinds which we were almost carried away with. And in truth, if any one diligently considers it, and compares it with what is done in our Church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our Doctrine not only to be very different from it, but repugnant to it.* If this be the case, they do like the rest of the Children of this World prudently enough in their Generation: Can we blame 'em for being against the Scriptures, when the Scriptures are acknowledged to be so clearly against them? But surely no Body that considereth these things would be of that Church, which is brought by the undeniable Evidence of the things themselves to this shameful confession, *that several of their Doctrines and Practices are very contrary to the Word of God.*

Much more might have been said against the Practice of the Church of *Rome* in these two particulars, but this is sufficient.

I shall in the *second* place consider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in justification of so contumelious an Affront to Mankind, so great a Tyranny and Cruelty to the Souls of Men? hath God forbidden the People to look into the Scriptures? No; quite contrary. Was it the Practice of the ancient Church to lay this restraint upon Men; or to celebrate the Service of God in an unknown Tongue? our adversaries them-

selves have not the Face to pretend this. I shall truly represent the substance of what they say in these *two* Points.

I. As to the Service of God in an Unknown Tongue they say these *four* things for themselves.

1. That the People do exercise a general Devotion, and come with an intention to serve God; and that is accepted, though they do not particularly understand the Prayers that are made, and the Lessons that are read.

But is this all that is intended in the Service of God? does not St. *Paul* expressly require more? *that* the Understanding of the People should be edified by the particular Service that is performed? And if what is done be not particularly understood, he tells us the People are not edified, nor can say *Amen* to the Prayers and Thanksgivings that are put up to God; and that any Man that should come in and find People serving of God in this unprofitable and unreasonable manner would conclude that they were mad.

And if there be any general Devotion in the People, it is because in general they understand what they are about; and why may they not as well understand the particular Service that is performed, that so they might exercise a particular Devotion? So that they are devout no farther than they understand; and consequently as to what they do not understand, had every whit as good be absent.

2. They say, the Prayers are to God, and he understands them; and that is enough. But what harm were it, if all they that pray understood them also? Or indeed how can Men pray to God without understanding what they ask of him? Is not Prayer a part of the Christian Worship? and is not that a reasonable Service? and is any Service reasonable that is not directed by our Understandings, and accompanied with our Hearts and Affections?

But then what say they to the *Lessons* and Exhortations of Scripture, which are likewise read to the People in an Unknown Tongue? Are these directed to God, or to the People only? And are they not design'd by God for their instruction; and read either to that purpose or to none? And is it possible to instruct Men by what they do not understand? This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by concealing from the People the things which they should learn. Is it not all one, as to all purposes of Edification, as if the Scriptures were not read, or any thing else in the place of them? as they many times do their Legends, which the wiser sort among them do not believe when they read them. For all things are alike to them that understand none; as all things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows no difference of things; it is only Knowledge that can distinguish.

3. They say that some do, at least in some measure, understand the particular Prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the rest; and more than the Church either desires or intends. For if they desired it, they might order their Service so, as every Man might understand it.

4. They say that it is convenient that God should be served and worshipped in the same Language all the World over. Convenient for whom? For God? or for the *People*? Not for God surely. For he understands all other Languages as well as *Latin*, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly it cannot be so convenient for the *People*, because they generally understand no Language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they should not understand what they do in the Service of God. But perhaps they mean that it is convenient for the *Roman* Church to have it so; because this will look like an argument that they are the *Catholic*

tholick or Universal Church, when the Language which was originally theirs shall be the Universal Language in which all Nations shall serve God; and by this means also they may bring all Nations to be of their Religion, and yet make them never the wiser; and this is a very great convenience, because Knowledge is a troublesome thing, and Ignorance very quiet and peaceable, rendring Men fit to be governed, and unfit to dispute.

II. As to their depriving the People of the Scriptures, the sum of what they say may be reduced to these *three* Heads.

1. That the Church can give leave to Men to read the Scriptures. But this not without great trouble and difficulty: there must be a License for it under the hand of the Bishop or Inquisitor, by the Advice of the Priest or Confessor, concerning the fitness of the Person that desires this Privilege; And we may be sure they will think none fit, but those of whom they have the greatest confidence and security: And whoever presumes to do it otherwise, is to be denied Absolution; which is, as much as in them lies, to damn Men for presuming to read the Word of God without their leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in *England*, where they hold their People upon more slippery Terms, yet this Privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full possession of their Power, and have the People perfectly under their Yoke.

2. They tell us they instruct the People otherwise. This indeed were something if they did it to purpose; but generally they do it very sparingly and slightly. Their Sermons are commonly made up of feigned Stories and Miracles of *Saints*, and Exhortations to the Worship of them, (and especially of the Blessed *Virgin*) and of their Images and Relicks. And for the truth of this I appeal to the innumerable Volumes of their *Sermons* and *Postils* in Print; which I suppose are none of their Worst. I am sure *Erasmus* says that in his time in several Countries the People did scarce once in half a year hear a profitable Sermon to exhort them to true Piety. Indeed they allow the People some *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of Devotion; and yet in many of them they have the conscience and the confidence to *steal away the second Commandment* in the face of the *eighth*.

But, to bring the matter to a Point, if those helps of instruction are agreeable to the Scriptures, why are they so afraid the People should read the Scriptures; if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them?

3. They say that People are apt to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, and that the promiscuous use of them hath been the great occasion of Heresies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very best things in the World, that they are liable to be abused: Health and Light and Liberty, as well as Knowledge. But must all these be therefore taken away? This very inconvenience of Peoples wresting the Scriptures to their own ruin *St. Peter* takes notice of in his days; but he does not therefore forbid Men the reading of them, as his more prudent Successors have done since. Suppose the reading of the Scriptures hath been the occasion of Heresies; were there ever more than in the first Ages of Christianity? and yet neither the Apostles nor their Successors ever prescribed this Remedy. But are they in earnest? must not Men know the Truth for fear of falling into Errour? Because Men may possibly miss their way at noon-day, must they never travel but in the Night, when they are sure to lose it?

And when all is done, this is not true, that Heresies have sprung from this cause. They have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the Scriptures neither were, nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the History and Experience of all Ages. I am well assured the ancient

Fathers

Fathers were of another mind. *St. Chrysostom* says, *If Men would be conversant in the Scriptures and attend to them, they would not only fall into errors themselves, but rescue those that are deceived: And that the Scriptures would instruct Men both in right Opinions and a good Life.* And *St. Hierome* more expressly to our purpose. *That infinite Evils arise from the Ignorance of the Scriptures; and that from that cause the most part of Heresies have come.*

But if what they say were true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient Heresies upon the ill management of things by our *Saviour*, and his *Apostles*, and the holy *Fathers* of the Church for so many Ages, and their imprudent dispensing of the Scriptures to the People? This indeed is to charge the matter home; and yet this consequence is unavoidable. For the Church of *Rome* cannot justify the Piety and Prudence of their present practices, without accusing all these.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to both these practices is this. That though these things were otherwise in the *Apostles* times, and in the *Ancient Church*, yet the Church hath power to alter them according to the exigence and circumstances of time. I have purposely reserved this for the last place, because it is their last refuge; and if this fail them they are gone.

To shew the weakness of this pretence, we will, if they please, take it for granted, that the Governours of the Church have in no Age more power, than the *Apostles* had in theirs. Now *St. Paul* tells us, *2 Cor. 10. 8.* that the Authority which the *Apostles* had given them from the Lord, was only *for edification, but not for destruction*: And the same *St. Paul* makes it the business of a whole Chapter to shew that the performing the Publick Service of God, and particularly Praying in an unknown Tongue, are contrary to Edification; from which Premises the Conclusion is Plain, That the *Apostles* themselves had no Authority to appoint the Service of God to be performed in an Unknown Tongue; and surely it is Arrogance for the Church in any Age to pretend greater Authority than the *Apostles* had.

This is the summ of what our *Adversaries* say in justification of themselves in these Points. And there is no doubt, but that Men of wit and confidence will always make a shift to say something for any thing: and some way or other blanch over the blackest and most absurd things in the World. But I leave it to the judgment of Mankind whether any thing be more unreasonable than to tell Men in effect, that it is fit they should understand as little of Religion as is possible; that God hath published a very dangerous Book, with which it is not safe for the People to be familiarly acquainted; that our Blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, and the ancient *Christian Church* for more than six hundred years were not wise Managers of Religion, nor prudent Dispensers of the Scriptures; but like fond and foolish Fathers put a Knife and a Sword into the hands of their Children, with which they might easily have foreseen what mischief they would do to themselves and others. And who would not chuse to be of such a Church which is provided of such excellent and effectual means of Ignorance, such wise and infallible Methods for the prevention of Knowledge in the People, and such variety of close shutters to keep out the Light?

I have chosen to insist upon this Argument, because it is so very plain, that the most ordinary capacity may judge of this usage and dealing with the Souls of Men; which is so very gross that every Man must needs be sensible of it; because it toucheth Men in the common rights of human Nature, which belong to them as much as the Light of Heaven, and the Air we breathe in.

It requires no subtilty of Wit, no skill in Antiquity, to understand these Controversies between us and the Church of *Rome*. For there are no *Fathers* to be pretended on both sides in these Questions: They yield we have Antiquity on ours: And we refer it to the common sense of Mankind, which Church, that of *Rome* or *Ours*, hath all the Right and Reason in the World on her side in these Debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over Christians, the Governours of their Church, or ours? who use the People like Sons and Freemen, and who like Slaves? who feed the Flock of Christ committed to them, and who take the Childrens Bread from them? who they are that when their Children ask Bread, for Bread give them a Stone, and for an Egg a Serpent; I mean the *Legends* of their *Saints* instead of the *Holy Scriptures*, which are able to make Men wise unto salvation: And who they are that lie most justly under the suspicion of Errours and Corruptions, they who bring their Doctrine and Practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tryed by the true Touchstone, the *Word of God*; or they who shun the light, and decline all manner of tryal and examination? and who are most likely to carry on a Worldly Design, they who drive a Trade of such mighty Gain and Advantage under pretence of Religion, and make such Markets of the Ignorance and Sins of the People; or we whom Malice it self cannot charge with serving any Worldly Design by any allowed Doctrine or Practice of our Religion? for we make no money of the Mistakes of the People, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new Places of Torment to make them willing to empty their Purses in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not like them pretend a mighty Bank and Treasure of Merits in the Church, which they sell to the People for ready Money, giving them Bills of Exchange from the *Pope* to *Purgatory*; when they who grant them have no reason to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other World.

For our parts we have no fear that our People should understand Religion too well: We could wish, with *Moses*, that *all the Lord's People were Prophets*: We should be heartily glad the People would read the *Holy Scriptures* more diligently, being sufficiently assured that it is their own Fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: We have no Doctrines or Practices contrary to Scripture, and consequently no occasion to keep it close from the sight of the People, or to hide any of the Commandments of God from them: We leave these mean arts to those who stand in need of them.

In a Word, there is nothing which God hath said to Men, which we desire should be concealed from them: Nay, we are willing the People should examine what we teach, and bring all our Doctrines to the *Law* and to the *Testimony*; that if they be not according to *this Rule*, they may neither believe them nor us. 'Tis only things false and adulterate which shun the Light and fear the Touchstone. We have that security of the Truth of our Religion and of the agreeableness of it to the *Word of God*; that honest confidence of the goodness of our Cause, that we do not forbid the People to read the best Books our Adversaries can write against it.

And now let any impartial Man judge whether this be not a better argument of a good Cause, to leave Men at liberty to try the grounds of their Religion, than the courses which are taken in the Church of *Rome*, to awe Men with an *Inquisition*; and, as much as is possible, to keep the Common People in Ignorance, not only of what their late Adversaries, the *Protestants*, but their chief and ancient Adversary, the *Scriptures*, have to say against them.

A Man had need of more than common security of the Skill and Integrity of those to whom he perfectly resigns his Understanding; this is too great a Trust to be reposed in humane frailty, and too strong a Temptation to others to impose upon us, to abuse our blindness, and to make their own ends of our voluntary Ignorance and easie Credulity. This is such a folly as if a rich Man should make his Physician his Heir; which is to tempt him either to destroy him or to let him die, for his own Interest. So he that trusts the care of his Soul with other Men, and at the same time by *irrevocable Deed* settles his Understanding upon them, lays too great a Temptation before them to seduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon our selves. What cause have we to bless God who are so happily rescued from that more than *Egyptian* Darknes and Bondage, wherein this Nation was detained for several Ages, who are delivered out of the hands of those cruel Task-Masters, who required Brick without straw; that Men should be religious without competent Understanding, and work out their own Salvation while they denied them the means of all others the most necessary to it; who are so uncharitable as to allow us no Salvation out of their Church, and yet so unreasonable as to deny us the very best means of Salvation when we are in it.

Our Forefathers thought it a mighty Privilege to have the Word of God restored to them, and the Publick Prayers and Service of God celebrated in a known Tongue. Let us use this inestimable Privilege with great modesty and humility; not to the nourishing of pride and self-conceit, of division and faction; but as the *Apostle* exhorts, *Let the Word of God dwell richly in you, in all wisdom; and let the Peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It concerns us mightily (with which admonition I shall conclude) both for the honour and support of our Religion, to be at better Union among our selves, and not to divide about lesser things: and so to demean our selves, as to take from our Adversaries all those pretences whereby they would justify themselves, or at least extenuate the guilt of that heavy Charge, which falls every whit as justly upon them as ever it did upon the *Scribes and Pharisees*, of taking away the Key of Knowledge, and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against Men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering those that are entering to go in.

S E R M O N XXXI.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Preached before her Royal Highness the Princess *Anne* of *Denmark* at *Tunbridge-Wells*, September the 2d. 1688.

Matthew xxv. 1, 2, &c.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

And five of them were Wise, and five were Foolish, &c.

MY Design at present is to explain this *Parable*, and to make such *Observations* upon it as seem most naturally, and without squeezing the *Parable* to spring from it: And then to make some *Application* of it to our selves.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins: By the *Kingdom of Heaven* is meant the State and Condition of things under the *Gospel*; By the *Ten Virgins*, those who embraced the Profession of it, which is here represented by their *taking their Lamps and going forth to meet the Bridegroom*: In Allusion to the ancient Custom of *Marriages*, in which the *Bridegroom* was wont to lead home his *Bride* in the Night by the Light of *Lamps or Torches*.

But this Profession was not in all equally firm and fruitful; and therefore those who preserv'd and continued stedfast in this Profession, notwithstanding all the Temptations and Allurements of the World, and all the fierce Storms and Assaults of Persecution to which this Profession was exposed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, and abound in the Graces and Virtues of a good Life; These are the *Wise Virgins*: But those who either deserted this Profession, or did not bring forth Fruits answerable to it, are the *Foolish Virgins*.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we consider how the *Parable* represents them, *vers. 3, 4.* *They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oyl with them: But the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their Lamps.* So that they both took their *Lamps*, and both lighted them, and therefore must both be suppos'd to have some *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at first, as appears from *verse 8.* where *the foolish Virgins said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.* They had it seems some *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at first, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future Supply. And therefore the difference between the *wise* and *foolish* Virgins did not, as some have imagin'd, consist in this, that the *wise* Virgins had *Oyl*, but the *foolish* had none; but in this, that the *foolish* had taken no care for a further supply, after the *Oyl* which was at first put into their *Lamps* was spent; as the *wise* had done, who besides the *Oyl* that was in their *Lamps*, carried likewise a *Reserve* in some other *Vessel*, for a continual supply of the *Lamp*, as there should be occasion; *the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their Lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, That they who are represented by the *wise Virgins* had not only embraced the Profession of the *Christian* Religion, as the *foolish Virgins* also had done, for they both had their *Lamps* lighted; but they likewise persever'd in that Profession, and brought forth Fruits answerable to it. For by *Oyl* in their *Lamps*, and the first lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that solemn Profession of *Faith* and *Repentance* which all *Christians* make in *Baptism*: By that farther supply of *Oyl*, which the *wise Virgins* only took care to provide, is signified our Constancy and Perseverance in this Profession, together with the Fruits of the Spirit, and the Improvement of the *Grace* received in *Baptism* by the Practice and Exercise of all the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good Life, whereby Men are fitted and prepar'd for *Death* and *Judgment*, which are here represented to us by the coming of the *Bridegroom*.

This being plainly the main Scope and Intention of the *Parable*, I shall explain the rest of it, as there shall be occasion, under the several *Observations* which I shall raise from the several parts of it. And they shall be these.

First, I observe the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his *Parables*; as if He would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the *Gospel*, and make profession of it, the Number of them that are truly good, is equal to those that are bad. For our *B. Saviour* here represents the whole Number of the *Professours* of *Christianity* by *Ten Virgins*, the half whereof the *Parable* seems to suppose to be truly and really good, and to persevere in goodness to the end, *ver. 1, 2.* *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

Secondly, I observe how very common it is for Men to neglect this great Concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a due Preparation for another World; and how willing Men are to deceive themselves herein, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the Description of the *foolish Virgins*, who had provided no supply of *Oyl* in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furnished themselves by borrowing or buying of others, *vers. 8, 9, 10.*

Thirdly, I observe, That even the better sort of *Christians* are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for *Death* and *Judgment*:
Whilst

Whilst the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept; even the Wise Virgins as well as the Foolish.

Fourthly, I observe further, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great Work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. Thus the *Foolish Virgins* did, and what a sad confusion and hurry they were in we may see *ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.* And at midnight there was a cry made, *Behold! the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.* At midnight; the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other: *Then all those Virgins arose, and trimmed their Lamps: and the Foolish said unto the Wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out: But the Wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves.* And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, *vers. 10, 11, 12.* And whilst they went to buy the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut. Afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, *Lord, Lord, open to us: But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, That no Man can do more than needs, and is his Duty to do, by way of preparation for another World. For when the *Foolish Virgins* would have beg'd of the *Wise* some Oyl for their Lamps, the *Wise* answered, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you. It was only the *Foolish Virgins* that had entertain'd this foolish conceit, that there might be an over-plus of *Grace* and *Merit* in others sufficient to supply their Want: But the *Wise* knew not of any that they had to spare, but suppos'd all that they had little enough to qualifie them for the reward of *Eternal Life*; Not so, say they, μήποτε, lest at any time, lest when there should be Need and Occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should prove little enough for our selves.

Sixthly and lastly, I observe, That if we could suppose any Persons to be so over-good, as to have more *Grace* and *Goodness* than needs to qualifie them for the reward of *Eternal Life*, yet there is no assigning and transferring of this over-plus of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one Man to another. For we see, *vers. 9, 10.* that all the ways which they could think of, of borrowing, or buying Oyl of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner should be in a condition to merit for another.

All these *Observations* seem to have some fair and probable Foundation in some part or other of this *Parable*; and most of them, I am sure, are agreeable to the main Scope and Intention of the whole. I shall speak to them severally, and as briefly as I can.

First, I observe the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his *Parables*; as if he would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the *Gospel*, and make *Profession* of it, the number of those who make a firm and sincere *Profession* of it, and persevere in *Goodness* to the end, is equal to the number of those who do not make good their *Profession*, or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take notice, that our *B. Saviour* in this *Parable* represents the whole number of the *Professors* of *Christianity* by *Ten Virgins*, the half of which the *Parable* seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the *Christian Profession*, and to have persever'd therein to the last; *The Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

And this *Decorum* our *B. Saviour* seems carefully to observe in his other *Parables*: As in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal*, *Luke 15.* where for *one* Son that left his Father, and took riotous Courses, there was *another* that stayed always with him, and continued constant to his Duty. And in the *Parable* of the *Ten Talents*, which immediately follows that of the *Ten Virgins*, *two* are supposed to improve the Talents committed to them, for *one* that made no Improvement of his. He that had *five Talents* committed to him, made them *five more*, and he that had *two* gained *other two*; and only he that had but *one Talent*, hid it in the Earth, and made no Improvement of it. And in the *Parable* which I am now upon, the number of the *Professors* of *Christianity*, who took care to fit and prepare themselves for the coming of the *Bridegroom*, is supposed equal to the number of those who did not.

And whether this be particularly intended in the *Parable* or not, it may however be thus far instructive to us; That we should be so far from lessening the number of *true Christians*, and from confining the *Church* of *Christ* within a narrow Compass, so as to exclude out of its *Communion* the far greatest part of the *Professors* of *Christianity*; that on the contrary, we should enlarge the *Kingdom* of *Christ* as much as we can, and extend our *Charity* to all *Churches* and *Christians*, of what *Denomination* soever, as far as regard to *Truth*, and to the *Foundations* of the *Christian Religion* will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part, than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side.

And for this reason perhaps it is, that our *B. Saviour* thought fit to frame his *Parables* with so remarkable a *Byass* to the charitable side: Partly to instruct us, to extend our *Charity* towards all *Christian Churches*, and *Professors* of the *Christian Religion*, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with Reason we can: And partly to reprove the uncharitableness of the *Jews*, who positively excluded all the rest of Mankind, besides themselves, from all hopes of *Salvation*. An odious Temper, which to the infinite Scandal of the *Christian Name* and Profession, hath prevail'd upon some *Christians* to that notorious Degree, as not only to shut out all the *Reform'd* Part of the *Western Church*, almost equal in number to themselves, from all hopes of *Salvation* under the notion of *Hereticks*; but likewise to un-church all the other *Churches* of the *Christian World*, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own Subjection to the *Bishop* of *Rome*: And this they do, by declaring it to be of necessity to *Salvation* for every Creature to be subject to the *Roman Bishop*. And this *Supremacy* of the *Bishop* of *Rome* over all *Christian Churches*, *Bellarmin* calls the *Sum* of the *Christian Religion*. So that the *Roman Communion* is plainly founded in *Schism*, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable Principle that can be, namely, that they are the only true Church of *Christ*, out of which none can be saved: which was the very *Schism* of the *Donatists*. And in this they are so positive, that the learned Men of that Church, in their Disputes and Writings, are much more inclinable to believe the *Salvation* of *Heathens* to be possible, than of any of those *Christians* whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*. The Faith of the Church of *Rome* is certainly none of the best; but one of the greatest and most essential Vertues of the *Christian Religion*, I mean *Charity*, I doubt they have the least share of any *Christian Church* this day in the World.

Secondly,

Secondly, I observe, not from any particular *Circumstance*, but from the main *Scope* and Design of this *Parable*, How very apt a great part of *Christians* are to neglect this great Concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a careful and due preparation for another World; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take the pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the description of the *Foolish Virgins*, who had provided no supply of Oyl in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furnish'd themselves by borrowing or buying of others, *vers.* 8, 9, 10. They contented themselves with having their *Lamps* lighted at their first setting out to meet the *Bridegroom*, that is, with their being admitted into the *Profession* of Christianity by *Baptism*, but either were not stedfast in this *Profession*, or were not careful to adorn it with the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good Life. II.

And the true Reason why Men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and are so hardly brought to those things wherein Religion mainly consists, I mean the Fruits of the Spirit, and the Practice of real Goodness; I say, the true Reason of this is, because they are extreamly desirous to reconcile, if it were possible, the Hopes of Eternal Happiness in another World, with a Liberty to live as they list in this present World: They are loth to be at the Trouble and Drudgery of mortifying their Lusts, and governing their Passions, and bridling their Tongues, and practising all those Duties which are comprehended in those two great Commandments of the Love of God and of our Neighbour: They would fain gain the favour of God, and make their Calling and Election sure, by some easier way than by giving all diligence, to add to their Faith and Knowledge the Graces and Virtues of a good Life.

For the plain truth of the matter is, Men had rather that Religion should be any thing than what indeed it is, *viz.* the thwarting and crossing of their vicious Inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt Affections, the due care and government of their unruly Appetites and Passions, the sincere endeavour, and the constant practice of all Holiness and Virtue in their Lives: And therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomely palliate and excuse their evil Inclinations and Practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked Lives, they would be contented to make an *honourable amends* and compensation to Almighty God in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of Mankind in all Ages, to defeat the great End and Design of Religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it, which, as they think, may serve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much Devotion and Respect towards God, and really costing them more Money and Pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better, by some other way than that which he hath prescribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this false Principle, Religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among *Jews* and *Christians*, into external and little Observances, and into a great zeal for lesser Things, with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of Religion; and, in a Word, into infinite *Superstitions* of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary

traordinary Righteousness and Merit of these things: In which some have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a strict Bargain with God for Eternal Life and Happiness; and have treated Him in so insolent a manner, by their Doctrine of the *Merit* of their *Devotions* and *good Works*, as if God were as much beholden to them for their Service and Obedience, as they are to Him for the Reward of them; which they are not afraid to say they may challenge at God's Hands, as of Right and Justice belonging to them.

Nay, so far have they carried this *Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, as not only to pretend to merit Eternal Life for themselves, but likewise to do a great deal more for the Benefit and Advantage of others, who have not Righteousness and Goodness enough of their own: Which was the silly conceit of the *Foolish Virgins* here in the *Parable*, as I shall have occasion to shew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that such easie ways of Religion and pleasing God, are very grateful to the corrupt Nature of Man, and that Men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil Course, are glad to be of a Church which will assure Salvation to Men upon such Terms: The great difficulty is, for Men to believe that things which are so apparently absurd and unreasonable can be true; and to persuade themselves that they can impose upon God by such pretences of Service and Obedience, as no wise *Prince* or *Father* upon Earth is to be deluded withal by his *Subjects* or *Children*. We ought to have worthier thoughts of God, and to consider that He is a *great King*, and will be obey'd and observ'd by his Creatures *in his own way*, and make them happy upon his own Terms: and that Obedience to what he commands, is better and more acceptable to him, than any other Sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our Hands: and likewise, that he is infinitely Wise and Good; and therefore that the *Laws*, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our Happiness, than any *Inventions* and *Devices* of our own.

Thirdly, I observe that even the better and more considerate sort of *Christians* are not so careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for *Death* and *Judgment*; whilst the *Bridegroom* tarried, they all *slumbered* and *slept*. Even the *Disciples* of our *Saviour*, whilst he was yet personally present with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own Mouth, *Watch and pray lest ye enter into Temptation*; yet did not keep that guard upon themselves as to *watch with him for one hour*. In many things, says *St. James*, we offend all; even the best of us: And who is there that doth not, some time or other, remit of his Vigilancy and Care, so as to give the Devil an advantage, and to lie open to Temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himself? But then the difference between the *Wise* and *Foolish Virgins* was this, that though they both *slept*, yet the *Wise* did not let their *Lamps* go out; they neither quitted their *Profession*, nor did they extinguish it by a bad Life: and though when the *Bridegroom* came suddenly upon them, they were not so actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual Vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good disposition of their Minds, and the general course of a holy Life: Their *Lamps* might *burn dim* for want of continual trimming, but they had *Oyl* in their *Vessels* to supply their *Lamps*, which the *Foolish Virgins* had taken no care to provide. But surely the greatest Wisdom of all is to maintain a continual Watchfulness, that so we may not be surpriz'd by the coming of the *Bridegroom*, and be in a confusion when *Death* or *Judgment* shall overtake us. And blessed are those *Servants*, and wise indeed, whose *Lamps* always *burn bright*,

bright, and whom the Bridegroom when he comes shall find watching, and in a fit Posture and Preparation to meet Him.

Fourthly, I observe likewise, how little is to be done by us, to any good Purpose, in this great work of Preparation, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. And thus the foolish Virgins did, but what a sad confusion and hurry they were in at the sudden coming of the Bridegroom, when they were not only asleep, but when after they were awaken'd they found themselves altogether unprovided of that which was necessary to trim their Lamps, and to put them in a posture to meet the Bridegroom: When they wanted that which was necessary at that very instant, but could not be provided in an instant: I say, what a Tumult and Confusion they were in, being thus surpriz'd, the Parable represents to us at large, vers. 6, 7, 8, 9. and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.

At midnight there was a cry made; that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other; when they were fast asleep, and suddenly awaken'd in great Terrour, when they could not on the sudden recollect themselves, and consider what to do; when the Summons was so very short, that they had neither time to consider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And such is the Case of those who put off their Repentance and Preparation for another World, till they are surpriz'd by Death and Judgment; for it comes all to one in the Issue, which of them it be. The Parable indeed seems more particularly to point at our Lord's coming to Judgment, but the case is much the same as to those who are surpriz'd by sudden Death; such as gives them but little, or not sufficient time for so great a Work: Because such as Death leaves them, Judgment will certainly find them.

And what a miserable confusion must they needs be in, who are thus surpriz'd either by the one or the other? How unfit should we be, if the general Judgment of the World should come upon us on the sudden, to meet that Great Judge at his coming, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What shall we then be able to do, in that great and universal Consternation, when the Son of Man shall appear in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory; when the Sun shall be darken'd, and the Moon turned into blood, and all the powers of Heaven shall be shaken: when all Nature shall feel such violent Pangs and Convulsions, and the whole World shall be in a Combustion, flaming and cracking about our Ears: When the Heavens shall be shrivel'd up as a Scroll when it is roll'd together, and the Earth shall be toss'd from its Center, and every Mountain and Island shall be removed? What thoughts can the wisest Men then have about them, in the midst of so much Noise and Terrour? Of if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? when they shall see the Angel, that standeth upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifting up his hand to Heaven, and swearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that Time shall be no longer; as this dreadful Day is described, Rev. 10. 5, 6. and chap. 6. 15. where Sinners are represented at the Appearance of this Great Judge, not as flying to God in hopes of Mercy, but as flying from Him in utter despair of finding Mercy with him: The Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the Mighty Men, and the Rich Men, and the Great Captains hid themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Earth; and said to the Mountains and Rocks,
fall

fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the Great Day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? The biggest and the boldest Sinners that ever were upon Earth, shall then flee from the Face of Him, whom they have so often blasphemed and denied; and shall so far despair of finding Mercy with Him in that Day, who would sue to Him for it no sooner, that they shall address themselves to the *Mountains and Rocks*, as being more pitiful and exorable than *He*; *to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: From the wrath of the Lamb*, to signify to us that nothing is more terrible than *Meekness and Patience*, when they are thoroughly provok'd and turn'd into *Fury*.

In such dreadful Confusion shall all Impenitent Sinners be, when they shall be surpriz'd by that *Great and terrible Day of the Lord*: And the *Case* of a *dying Sinner*, who would take no care in the time of his *Life and Health* to make preparation for another World, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying Man can do in such a strait of time? in the midst of so much Pain and Weakness of Body, and of such Confusion and Amazement of Mind. With what heart can he set about so great a Work, for which there is so little Time? With what face can he apply himself to God in this Extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his Life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his Cries, and regard his Tears, that are forc'd from him in this day of his Necessity? when he is conscious to himself, that in that *long day* of God's *Grace and Patience* he turned a deaf Ear to all his merciful Invitations, and *rejected the counsel of God against himself*. In a word, how can he who would not know, in that his Day, the things which belonged to his peace, expect any other but that they should now be for ever hid from his Eyes, which are ready to be clos'd in utter Darkness?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a *Death-bed Repentance*: But I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one *Example*, that I know of, in the whole *Bible* of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean that of the *Penitent Thief* upon the *Cross*: And the Circumstances of his Case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to Men in ordinary Cases. We are not like to suffer in the Company of the *Son of God*, and of the *Saviour of the World*; and if we could do so, it is not certain that we should behave our selves towards Him so well as the *Penitent Thief* did, and make so very good an End of so very bad a Life.

And the *Parable* in the *Text*, is so far from giving any encouragement to a *Death-bed Repentance* and *Preparation*, that it rather represents their Case as desperate, who put off their *Preparation* to that Time. How ineffectual all that the *foolish Virgins* could do at that time did in the conclusion prove, is set forth to us at large in the *Parable*; They wanted *Oyl*, but could neither borrow nor buy it: They would then fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by entreaty, nor for Money: First they apply themselves to the *Wise Virgins*, for a share in the over-plus of their *Graces and Virtues*; the *Foolish* said unto the *Wise*, give us of your *Oyl* for our *Lamps* are gone out; but the *Wise* answered not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: The *Wise Virgins*, it seems knew of none they had to spare: And then they are represented as ironically sending the *Foolish Virgins* to some famous Market where this *Oyl* was pretendad to be sold; go ye

v. 8, 9, 10,
11, 12.

v. 8.

ye rather to them that sell and buy for your selves: And as dying and desperate Persons are apt to catch at every Twig, and when they can see no hopes of being saved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; so these Foolish Virgins follow the Advice; and whilst they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut; and afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not. V. 9. V. 10.

You see how little, or rather no Encouragement at all there is from any the least Circumstance in this Parable, for those who have delay'd their Preparation for another World, till they be overtaken by Death or Judgment, to hope by any thing that they can then do, by any importunity which they can then use, to gain admission into Heaven. Let those consider this with Fear and Trembling, who forget God, and neglect Religion all their Life-time, and yet feed themselves with vain hopes by some Device or other to be admitted into Heaven at last.

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as Works of Super-erogation, that is, that no Man can do more than needs, and than is his Duty to do, by way of Preparation for another World. For when the Foolish Virgins would have begg'd of the Wise some Oyl for their Lamps, the Wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: It was only the Foolish Virgins that in the time of their Extremity, and when they were conscious that they wanted that which was absolutely necessary to qualifie them for admission into Heaven, who had entertain'd this idle Conceit, that there might be an over-plus of Grace and Merit in others sufficient to supply their want: But the Wise knew not of any they had to spare, but supposed all that they had done, or could possibly do, to be little enough to qualifie them for the glorious Reward of Eternal Life: Not so, say they, μήποτε lest at any time, that is, lest when there should be Need and Occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should be little enough for our selves: And in this Point they had been plainly instructed by the Bridegroom himself, But ye, when ye have done all, say we are unprofitable Servants, and have done nothing but what was our Duty to do. V. V. 8. V. 9.

And yet this Conceit of the Foolish Virgins, as absurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earnest by a grave Matron, who gives out her self to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, and the only infallible Oracle of Truth; I mean the Church of Rome, whose avowed Doctrine it is, that there are some Persons so excellently good, that they may do more than needs for their own Salvation: And therefore when they have done as much for themselves, as in strict Duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable consideration for Heaven, and as much as in equal Justice between God and Man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their Friends, and begin a new Score; and from that time forwards may put the Surplusage of their Good Works as a Debt upon God, to be laid up in the Publick Treasury of the Church, as so many Bills of Credit which the Pope by his Pardons and Indulgences may dispense, and place to whose account he pleases: And out of this Bank, which is kept at Rome, those who never took care to have any Righteousness of their own may be supplied at reasonable rates.

To which they have added a further supply of Grace, if there should be any need of it, by the Sacrament of extream Unction, never heard of in the Christian Church for many Ages; but devised, as it were on purpose,

pose, to furnish such *Foolish Virgins* with *Oyl*, as are here described in the *Parable*.

And thus by one *Device* or other they have enervated the *Christian Religion* to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true *Virtue* and *Efficacy* upon the *Hearts* and *Lives* of *Men*: And, instead of the real *Fruits* of *Goodness* and *Righteousness*, it produceth little else but *Superstition* and *Folly*; or if it produce any *real Virtues*, yet even the *Virtue* of those *Virtues* is in a great measure spoil'd by their arrogant pretences of *Merit* and *Super-erogation*, and is render'd insignificant to themselves by their insolent *Carriage* and *Behaviour* towards *God*.

VI. *Sixthly* and *lastly*, If we could suppose any *Person* to be so overgrown with *Goodness*, as to have more than needs to qualify them for the *Reward* of *Eternal Life*; yet there can be no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one *Man* to another. For we see that all the ways that could be thought on of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying* *Oyl* of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one *Sinner* who owes all that he hath, and much more to *God*, should have any thing to spare wherewithal to *merit* for another.

Indeed our *B. Saviour* hath *merited* for us all the *Reward* of *Eternal Life*, upon the *Conditions* of *Faith* and *Repentance* and *Obedience*: But the infinite *Merit* of his *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be of no *Benefit* and *Advantage* to us, if we our selves be not really and inherently *righteous*. So *St. John* tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary *Conceit*, *Little Children*, let no *Man* deceive you, he that doth *righteousness* is *righteous*, even as *He* is *righteous*.

If we do sincerely endeavour to please *God*, and to keep his *Commandments* in the general course of a *Holy* and *Virtuous* *Life*, the *Merit* of *Christ's* perfect *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be available with *God* for the acceptance of our *sincere* though but *imperfect* *Obedience*. But if we take no care to be *righteous* and good our selves, the perfect *Righteousness* of *Christ* will do us no good; much less the *imperfect* *Righteousness* of any other *Man* who is a *Sinner* himself. And the holiest *Man* that ever was upon *Earth*, can no more *assign* and make over his *Righteousness*, or *Repentance*, or any part of either, to another that wants it, that a *Man* can bequeath his *Wisdom*, or *Learning* to his *Heir*, or his *Friend*: No more than a *sick* *Man* can be restored to *health* by virtue of the *Physick* which another *Man* hath taken.

Let no *Man* therefore think of being good by a *Deputy*, that cannot be contented to be happy, and to be saved the same way, that is, to go to *Hell* and to be tormented there in *Person*, and to go to *Heaven* and be admitted into that *Place of Bliss* only by *Proxy*. So that these *Good Works* with a *hard Name*, and the making over the *Merit* of them to others, have no manner of *Foundation* either in *Scripture* or *Reason*, but are all meer *Fancy* and *Fiction* in *Divinity*.

V. 13. The *Inference* from all this shall be the *Application* which our *Saviour* makes of this *Parable*, Watch therefore, for ye know neither the *Day* nor the *Hour* wherein the *Son of Man* cometh; as if he had said, the design of this *Parable* is to instruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard, and in a constant readiness and preparation to meet the *Bridegroom*; because we know not the time of his coming to *Judgment*, nor yet, which will be of the same *Consequence* and *Concernment* to us, do any

any of us know the precise time of our own *Death*. Either of these may happen at any time, and come when we least expect them. And therefore we should make the best and speediest Provision that we can for another World, and should be continually upon our watch, and trimming our Lamps, that we may not be surpriz'd by either of these; neither by our own *particular Death*, nor by the *general Judgment* of the World: *Because the Son of Man will come in a Day when we look not for Him, and at an Hour when we are not aware.*

More particularly, we should take up a present and effectual Resolution not to delay our *Repentance*, and the Reformation of our Lives, that we may not have that great Work to do, when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to dispose of our *Temporal Concernments*, much less to prepare for *Eternity*, and to do that in a few Moments, which ought to have been the care and endeavour of our whole Lives: That we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant *Repentance*; and to do that in great haste and confusion, which certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate Thoughts, and all the Consideration in the World.

And we should provide store of Oyl in our *Vessels*, wherewith to supply our Lamps, that they may *burn bright* to the last; I mean, we should improve the *Grace* which we received in *Baptism*, by abounding in the Fruits of the Spirit, and in all the Substantial Virtues of a good Life; that so an entrance may be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.

By this means, when we are called to meet the *Bridegroom*, we shall not be put to those miserable and sharking shifts which the *Foolish Virgins* were driven to, of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl*; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: And though the dying Man may make a hard shift to support himself with these false Comforts for a little while, yet when the short Delusion is over, which will be as soon as ever he is step'd into the other World, he will to his everlasting Confusion and Trouble find the Door of Heaven shut against him, and that notwithstanding all his *vast Treasure* of Pardons and Indulgences, which have cost him so much, and are worth so little, he shall never see the Kingdom of God.

And lastly, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our Lamps by quitting the Profession of our Holy Religion upon any temptation of Advantage, or for fear of any Loss or Suffering whatsoever. This Occasion will call for all our Faith and Patience, all our Courage and Constancy,

Nunc animis opus, Aenea, nunc pectore firmo.

When it comes to this *Trial*, we had need to gird up the Loins of our Minds, to summon all our Forces, and to put on the whole Armour of God; that we may be able to stand fast in an evil Day, and when we have done all to stand.

And now, my Brethren, to use the words of St. Peter, *I testifie unto you, that this is the true Grace of God wherein ye stand.* The Protestant Reformed Religion, which we in this Nation profess, is the very Gospel of Christ, the true ancient Christianity. 1 Pet. 5. 12.

And, for God's sake, since in this *hour of Temptation*, when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree, as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testify our love to it, in the same way that our Saviour would have us shew our love to Him, by keeping his Commandments.

I will conclude all with the *Apostle's* Exhortation, so very proper for this
Phil. 1. 27. purpose, and to this present Time, *Only let your Conversation be as it becometh
the Gospel of Christ*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead Lives suit-
able to the *Christian Religion*: And then, as it follows, *stand fast in one Spi-
rit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel: And in nothing
terrified by your Adversaries, which to them is an evident token of Perdition,
but to you of Salvation, and that of God.*

Now unto him that is able to stablish you in the Gospel, and to keep you from
falling; and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory with exceed-
ing Joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion
and Power, both now and ever. Amen.

A
Thanksgiving-Sermon
FOR OUR
DELIVERANCE
BY THE
Prince of Orange.

Preached at LINCOLNS-INN Chappel,
January 31. 1688.

To the Worshipful the Masters of
the Bench, and the rest of the Gen-
tlemen of the Honourable Society
of *Lincolns-Inn*.

THough I was at first very unwilling to Expose
to the Publick a Sermon made upon so little
Warning, and so great an Occasion; yet up-
on second thoughts I could not think it fit to resist the
Unanimous and Earnest Request of so many Worthy Per-
sons, as the Masters of the Bench of this Honourable
Society; to whom I stand so much indebted for your great
and continued Respects to me, and kind acceptance of my
Labours among you for now above the space of Five and
Twenty Years. In a most grateful acknowledgment where-
of, this Discourse, such as it is, in mere Obedience to
your Commands, is now humbly presented to you, by

Your most Obliged and

Faithful Servant,

Feb. 28.
1682.

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SER.

S E R M O N XXXII.

Ezra ix. 13, 14.

And after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespas; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a Deliverance as this:

Should we again break thy Commandments, and joyn in affinity with the People of these Abominations; wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

I Am sufficiently aware that the particular occasion of these Words is, in several Respects very different from the Occasion of this Day's Solemnity. For these Words were spoken by *Ezra*, at a time appointed for Publick and Solemn Humiliation. But I shall not now consider them in that Relation, but rather as they refer to that Great Deliverance which God had so lately wrought for them; and as they are a Caution to take heed of abusing great Mercies received from God; and so they are very proper and pertinent to the great Occasion of this Day. Nay these Words, even in the saddest Aspect, are not so unsuitable to it. For we find in *Scripture* upon the most solemn Occasions of Humiliation, that good Men have always testified a thankful Sense of the goodness of God to them. And indeed, the Mercy of God doth then appear above measure merciful, when the Sinner is most deeply sensible of his own Vileness and Unworthiness. And so *Ezra* here, in the depth of their Sorrow and Humiliation, hath so great a sense of the greatness of their Deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it; *And hast given us such a Deliverance as this.* And on the other hand, we find that good Men, in their most solemn Praises and Thanksgivings, have made very serious Reflections upon their own Unworthiness. And surely the best way to make Men truly thankful, is first to make them very humble. When *David* makes his most solemn Acknowledgments to God for his great Mercies to him; how doth he abase himself before Him: *But who am I, and what is my People?* And so likewise, after he had summoned all the Powers and Faculties of his Soul to joyn in the Praises of God, he interposeth this seasonable Meditation, *He hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities.* The greater and more lively sense we have of the goodness of God to us, the more we shall abhor our selves in Dust and Ashes; nothing being more apt to melt us into Tears of Repentance, than the Consideration of great and undeserved Mercies vouchsafed to us. *The goodness of God doth naturally lead to Repentance.*

Having

Having thus reconciled the *Text* to the present *Occasion*, I shall for the more distinct handling of the *Words* take notice of these two Parts in them.

First, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is to come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and *since God hath punished us less than our Iniquities deserve*, and *hath given us such a Deliverance as this*; should we again break his *Commandments*.

Secondly, Here is a Sentence and Determination in the Case; *Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consum'd us*, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? This is not spoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of Question; but is the more vehemently positive, the more peremptorily affirmative; as if he had said, it cannot otherwise be in reason expected, but that after such repeated Provocations, *God should be angry with us till he had consumed us*.

- I. *First*, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and *for our great Trespas*; and *since God hath punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve*, and *hath given us such a Deliverance as this*: Should we again break his *Commandments*, and joyn in affinity with the People of these *Abominations*. In which *Words* these following *Propositions* seem to be involv'd, which I shall but just mention, and pass to the *Second Part* of the *Text*.

1. That Sin is the cause of all our Sufferings, *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and *for our great Trespas*. Our *Evil Deeds* bring all other Evils upon us.

2. That great Sins have usually a proportionable Punishment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatness of our Punishment; *for our Evil Deeds*, and *for our great Trespas*, there is the greatness of our Sin. But when I say that great Sins have a proportionable Punishment, I do not mean that any Temporal Punishments are proportionable to the great evil of Sin; but that God doth usually observe a proportion in the Temporal Punishments of Sin, so that although no Temporal Punishment be proportionable to Sin, yet the Temporal Punishment of one Sin holds a proportion to the Punishment of another; and consequently, lesser and greater Sins, have proportionably a lesser and greater Punishment.

3. That all the Punishments which God inflicts in this Life do fall short of the demerit of our Sins; and *seeing that our God hadst punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve*. In the *Hebrew* it is, and *hast kept down our Iniquities*, that is, that they should not rise up against us. The *LXX.* expresseth it very emphatically, *thou hast eased us of our Sins*, that is, thou hast not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the restraints which God puts upon his Anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the Sinner would not be able to bear it, but must sink under it. Indeed it is only said in the *Text*, that the Punishment which God inflicted upon the *Jews*, though it was a long Captivity, was beneath the desert of their Sins: But yet it is universally true, and *Ezra* perhaps might intend to insinuate so much, that all Temporal Punishments, though never so severe, are always less than our Iniquities deserve.

4. That God many times works very great Deliverances for those who are very unworthy of them; and *hast given us such a Deliverance as this*, notwithstanding our *Evil Deeds*, and notwithstanding our *great Trespas*.

5. That we are but too apt, even after great Judgments, and after great Mercies, to relapse into our former Sins; *should we again break thy Commandments*. *Ezra* insinuates that there was great reason to fear this, especially considering the strange temper of that People, who when God multiply'd

tiply'd his Blessings upon them, were so apt to wax fat and kick against Him; and though he had cast them several times into the furnace of Affliction, though they were melted for the present, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That it is good to take notice of those particular Sins which have brought the Judgments of God upon us. So *Ezra* does here; *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespas; and, should we again joyn in affinity with the People of these Abominations.*

Secondly, Here is a Sentence and Determination in the Case; *wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* Which Question, as I said before, doth imply a strong and peremptory Affirmative; as if he had said, after such a provocation there is great reason to conclude that God would be angry with us till he had consumed us. II.

From whence the *Observation* contained in this part of the *Text* will be this, *That it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, and a sad presage of ruin to a People, after great Judgments and great Deliverances, to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again.* Hear how passionately *Ezra* expresses himself in this Case, *vers. 6. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine Eyes to thee, my God.* Why? what was the cause of this great Shame and Confusion of face? He tells us, *vers. 9. for we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to set up the House of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a Wall in Judah and in Jerusalem; that is, to restore to them the free and safe exercise of their Religion.* Here was great Mercy and a mighty Deliverance indeed; and yet after this they presently relapsed into a very great Sin, *verse 10. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy Commandments.*

In the handling of this *Observation*, I shall do these two things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew that this is a very heavy aggravation of Sin, and

Secondly, That it is a fatal presage of ruin to a People.

First, It is a heavy aggravation of Sin after great Judgments, and after signal Mercies and Deliverances to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. Here are three things to be distinctly spoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of Sin to return to it after great Judgments.
2. To do this after great Mercies and Deliverances.
3. After both to return to the same Sins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of Sin after great Judgments have been upon us to return to an evil Course. Because this is an Argument of great obstinacy in Evil. The longer *Pharaoh* resisted the Judgments of God, the more was his wicked heart hardened, till at last he arriv'd at a monstrous degree of hardness; having been, as the *Text* tells us, hardened under ten Plagues; And we find, that after God had threaten'd the People of *Israel* with several Judgments, he tells them, that if they *will not be reformed by all these things*, *Lev. 26. 13. he will punish them seven times more for their Sins.* And if the just God will

in such a case punish seven times more, we may conclude that the Sin is seven times greater.

What sad Complaints doth the Prophet make of the People of *Israel* growing worse for Judgments. *Ab! sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, Children that have been corrupters, a seed of evil doers.* He can hardly find words enough to express how great Sinners they were: and he adds the reason in the next verse, *Why should they be smitten any more? they will revolt, more and more.* They were but the worse for Judgments. This renders them a *sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity.* And again, *The People turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts; therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* And the same Prophet further complains to the same purpose, *When thy hand is lifted up they will not see.* There is a particular brand set upon King *Ahaz*, because Affliction made him worse: *This is that King Ahaz, that is, that grievous and notorious Sinner: And what was it that render'd him so? In the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord; this is that King Ahaz, who is said to have provoked the Lord above all the Kings of Israel which were before him.*

2. It is likewise a fore aggravation of Sin, when it is committed after great Mercies and Deliverances vouchsafed to us. Because this is an Argument of great Ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge upon the People of *Israel*, that they remembred not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the band of all their Enemies on every side; neither shewed they kindness to the House of *Jerubbaal*, namely *Gideon* who had been their Deliverer, according to all the goodness which he had shewed to *Israel*. God, we see, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the Instruments of our Deliverance; but much more, when we are unthankful to Him the Author of it. And how severely doth *Nathan* the Prophet reproach *David* upon this account? Thus said the Lord God of *Israel*, *I anointed thee King over Israel, and deliver'd thee out of the hand of Saul, &c. And if this had been too little, I would moreover have done such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despis'd the Commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?* God here reckons up his manifold Mercies and Deliverances, and aggravates *David's* Sin upon this account. And he was very angry likewise with *Solomon* for the same reason, *because he had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appear'd to him twice.* However we may slight the Mercies of God, he keeps a punctual and strict account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great blot upon *Hezekiah*, that he returned not again according to the benefits done unto him. God takes very severe notice of all the unkind and unworthy returns that are made to Him for his Goodness.

Ingratitude to God is so unnatural and monstrous, that we find Him appealing against us for it to the inanimate Creatures. Hear, O Heavens, and give ear O Earth! for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourish'd and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me. And then he goes on and upbraids them with the Brute Creatures, as being more grateful to Men, than Men are to God. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass her Masters Crib, but *Israel* doth not know, my People doth not consider. And in the same Prophet there is the like Complaint, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the Land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.* They that will not acknowledge the Mercies of God's Providence, shall feel the strokes of his Justice.

There

There is no greater evidence in the World of an intractable Disposition, than not to be wrought upon by Kindness, not to be melted by Mercies, not to be obliged by Benefits, not to be tamed by gentle Usage. Nay, God expects that his Mercies should lay so great an Obligation upon us, that even a Miracle should not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there arise among you a Prophet, says Moses to the People of Israel, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder cometh to pass, whereof he spake to thee, saying, let us go after other Gods and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet. And he gives the Reason, because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord God of Israel, which brought you out of the Land of Egypt, and delivered you out of the House of Bondage.* Deut. 13. 1, 2.

3. It is a greater Aggravation yet, after great Mercies and Judgments to return to the same Sins. Because this can hardly be without our sinning against Knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the Sin is which we were guilty of, and have been so sorely punish'd for before. This is an Argument of a very perverse and incorrigible Temper, and that which made the Sin of the People of *Israel* so above measure sinful, that after so many signal Deliverances, and so many terrible Judgments, they fell into the same Sin of *murmuring ten times*; murmuring against God the Author, and against *Moses* the glorious Instrument of their Deliverance out of Egypt: which was one of the two great Types of the Old Testament, both of Temporal and Spiritual Oppression and Tyranny. Hear with what Resentment God speaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great Mercy and Deliverance. *Because all these Men which have seen my Glory, and my Miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the Wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my Voice, surely they shall not see the Land which I swear to their Fathers.* And after he had brought them into the promised Land, and wrought great Deliverances for them several times, how does he upbraid them with their proneness to fall again into the same Sin of Idolatry? *And the Lord said unto the Children of Israel, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites; from the Children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also and the Amalekites and Maonites did oppress you; and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their Hand: yet you have forsaken me, and served other Gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your Tribulation.* This incensed God so highly against them, that they still relaps'd into the same Sin of Idolatry, after so many Afflictions and so many Deliverances. Upon such an Occasion well might the Prophet say, *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Sins shall reprove thee: know therefore, that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.* It is hardly possible but we should know that the Wickedness for which we have been so severely corrected is an evil and bitter thing. Numb. 14. 22.

Thus much for the first part of the Observation, namely, That it is a fearful Aggravation of Sin, after great Judgments and great Deliverances to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. I proceed to the

Second Part, namely, That this is a fatal Presage of Ruin to a People; should we again break thy Commandments, and joyn in Affinity with the People; of these Abominations, wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? And so God threatens the People of *Israel* in the Text which I cited before, *wherefore I will deliver* Judg. 10. 13.

deliver you no more. Wherefore; that is, beause they would neither be re-form'd by the Afflictions wherewith God had exercis'd them, nor by the many wonderful Deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And there is great reason why God should deal thus with a People that continues impenitent both under the Judgments and Mercies of God.

1. Because this doth ripen the Sins of a Nation; and it is time for God to put in his Sickle when a People are ripe for ruin. When the measure of their Sins is full, it is no wonder if the Cup of his Indignation begin to overflow. It is said of the *Amorites*, four hundred years before God brought that fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extirpation of them, because *the Iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*. When neither the Mercies nor the Judgments of God will bring us to Repentance, we are then fit for Destruction; according to that of the *Apostle*, *What if God willing to shew his Wrath, and make his Power known, endured with much long suffering the Vessels of wrath fitted for Destruction?* They who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of God's Mercies, nor by the patience of his Judgments, seem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for Destruction.

2. Because this incorrigible Temper shews the Case of such Persons to be desperate and incurable, *Why should they be smitten any more?* says God of the People of *Israel*, *they will revolt more and more. How often would I have gathered you*, says our *B. Saviour* to the *Jews*, *even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings?* and ye would not. Behold, your *House is left to you desolate*, that is, ye shall be utterly destroyed; as it hapned forty years after to *Jerusalem*, and to the whole *Jewish Nation*.

When God sees that all the means which he can use do prove ineffectual, and to no purpose, he will then give over a People, as Physicians do their Patients when they see that Nature is spent, and their Case past remedy. When Men will not be the better for the best means that Heaven can use, God will then leave them to reap the Fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their Sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to our selves, and to the solemn Occasion of this Day.

And if this be our Case, let us take heed that this be not also our Doom and Sentence.

First, The Case in the Text doth very much resemble Ours. And that in three Respects. God hath sent great Judgments upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespasses: He hath punish'd us less than our Iniquities have deserv'd: And hath given us a very great and wonderful Deliverance.

1. God hath inflicted Great Judgments upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespasses. Great Judgments, both for the quality, and for the continuance of them. It shall suffice only to mention those which are of a more ancient Date. Scarce hath any Nation been more calamitous than this of Ours, both in respect of the Invasions and Conquests of Foreigners, and of our own Civil and Intestine Divisions. Four times we have been Conquer'd; By the *Romans*, *Saxons*, *Danes*, and *Normans*. And our intestine Divisions have likewise been great and of long continuance. Witness the *Barons Wars*, and that long and cruel Contest between the two Houses of *Tork* and *Lancaster*.

But to come nearer to our own Times, What fearful Judgments and Calamities of War, and Pestilence, and Fire, have many of us seen? And how close did they follow one another? What terrible havock did the Sword make amongst us for many years? And this not the Sword of a Foreign Enemy, but of a Civil War; the mischiefs whereof were all terminated up-
on

on our selves, and have given deep Wounds, and left broad Scars upon the most considerable Families in the Nation.

Alta manent civilis vulnera dextræ.

This War was drawn out to a great length, and had a Tragical end, in the Murther of an excellent King; and in the Banishment of his Children into a strange Country, whereby they were exposed to the Arts and Practices of those of another Religion; the mischievous Consequences whereof we have ever since sadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at last to put an end to the miserable Distractions and Confusions of almost twenty years, by the happy Restoration of the Royal Family, and our Ancient Government; which seem'd to promise to us a lasting Settlement, and all the Felicities we could wish: yet how soon was this bright and glorious Morning overcast, by the restless and black Designs of that sure and inveterate Enemy of ours, the Church of Rome, for the restoring of their Religion amongst us. And there was too much encouragement given to this Design, by those who had power in their Hands, and had brought home with them a secret good will to it.

For this great Trespass, and for our many other Sins, God was angry with us, and sent among us the most raging Pestilence that ever was known in this Nation, which in the space of eight or nine Months swept away near a third part of the Inhabitants of this vast and populous City, and of the Suburbs thereof; besides a great many thousands more in several parts of the Nation. But we did not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.

And therefore, the very next year after, God sent a terrible and devouring Fire, which in less than three days time laid the greatest part of this great City in Ashes. And there is too much reason to believe that the Enemy did this; that perpetual and implacable Enemy of the Peace and Happiness of this Nation.

And even since the time of that dreadful Calamity, which is now above twenty years ago, we have been in a continual fear of the cruel Designs of that Party, which had hitherto been incessantly working under ground, but now began to shew themselves more openly: and especially since a Prince of that Religion succeeded to the Crown, our Eyes have been ready to sail us for fear, and for looking after those dreadful things that were coming upon us, and seem'd to be even at the Door. A fear which this Nation could easily have rid it self of, because they that caused it were but a handful in comparison of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign Force and Assistance; had not the Principles of Humanity, and of our Religion too, restrain'd us from Violence and cruelty, and from every thing which had the appearance of undutifulness to the Government which the Providence of God had set over us. An instance of the like Patience, under the like Provocations, for so long a time, and after such visible and open attempts upon them, when they had the Laws so plainly on their side, I challenge any Nation or Church in the World, from the very Foundation of it, to produce. In-somuch, that if God had not put it into the Hearts of our kind Neighbours, and of that incomparable Prince, who laid and conducted that great Design with so much Skill and Secrecy, to have appear'd so seasonably for our rescue, our Patience had infallibly, without a Miracle, been our ruin. And I am sure if our Enemies had ever had the like Opportunity in their hands, and had overbalanced us in numbers but half so much as we did them, they would never have let it slip; but would long since have extirpated us utterly,

utterly, and have made the remembrance of us to have ceas'd from among Men.

And now if you ask me, for what Sins more especially God hath sent all these Judgments upon us? It will not, I think, become us to be very particular and positive in such Determinations. Thus much is certain, That we have all sinn'd and contributed to these Judgments; every one hath had some hand, more or less, in pulling down this Vengeance upon the Nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious Cause of God's Judgments as far as we can from our selves, and our own Party, and upon any slight Pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to instance in *one* or *two* things which may probably enough have had a more particular and immediate hand in drawing down the Judgments of God upon us.

Our horrible Contempt of Religion on the one hand, by our *Infidelity* and *Prophaneness*; and our shameful abuse of it on the other, by our gross *Hypocrisie*, and sheltering great Wickedness and Immoralities under the Cloak and Profession of Religion.

And then, great *Dissensions* and Divisions, great uncharitableness and bitterness of Spirit among those of the same Religion; so that almost from the beginning of our happy Reformation the *Enemy* had sown these *Tares*, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of *Rome*, the Seeds of Dissension were scattered very early amongst us; and a sower humour had been fermenting in the Body of the Nation, both upon account of *Religion* and *Civil* Interests, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.

And more particularly yet; That which is call'd the *great Trespas* here in the *Text*, their *joyning in Affinity with the People of these Abominations*, by whom they had been detain'd in a long Captivity: This, I say, seems to have had, both from the Nature of the Thing, and the just Judgment of God, no small influence upon a great part of the Miseries and Calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which *Popery* had by the *Marriages* and *Alliances* of our *Princes*, for two or three Generations together, with those of *that* Religion, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to those, who have the Authority to do it, to make effectual Provision by Law for the prevention of the like Inconvenience and Mischief in this Nation for ever.

2. Another *Parallel* between our Case and that in the *Text*, is, That God hath punish'd us less than our Iniquities did deserve. And this Acknowledgment we have as much reason to make for our selves, as *Ezra* had to do it in behalf of the *Jews*; *Thou our God hast punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve.* Thou, our God, hast punish'd us; there is the reason of so much Mercy and Mitigation. It is God, and not Man, with whom we have to do; and therefore it is, that we *the Children of Men are not consumed.* And it is our God likewise, to whom we have a more peculiar Relation, and with whom, by virtue of our Profession of *Christianity*, we are in *Covenant*: Thou our God hast punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve. He might justly have pour'd forth all his wrath, and have made his jealousy to have smok'd against us, and have blotted out the remembrance of us from under Heaven: He might have given us up to the will of our *Enemies*, and into the hands of those whose tender mercies are cruelty; He might have brought us into the Net which they had spread for us, and have laid a terrible load of affliction upon our *Loins*, and suffer'd insolent Men to ride over our heads, and them that hated us with a perfect hatred, to have had the rule over us: But he was graciously pleas'd to remember Mercy in the midst of Judgment, and to repent himself for his Servants, when he saw that their Power was gone, and that things

things were come to that extremity, that we were in all humane probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own Deliverance.

3. The last *Parallel* between our Case, and that in the *Text*, is the great and wonderful *Deliverance* which God hath wrought for us. And whilst I am speaking of this, *God is my Witness, whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son*, that I do not say one word upon this Occasion in flattery to Men, but in true thankfulness to Almighty God, and constrain'd thereto from a just Sense of his great Mercy to us all, in this marvellous Deliverance, in this *mighty Salvation which he wrought for us*. So that we may say with *Ezra*, *Since thou our God hadst given such a Deliverance as THIS*: So great, that we know not how to compare it with any thing but it Self. *God hath given us this Deliverance*. And therefore, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the praise*. For thou knowest, and we are all conscious to our selves, that we did in no wise deserve it; but quite the contrary. *God hath given it, and it ought to be so much the welcomer to us, for coming from such a Hand*. *It is the Lord's doing*, and therefore ought to be the more marvellous in our Eyes. It is a Deliverance full of *Mercy*, and I had almost said, full of *Miracle*. *The finger of God* was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine Interposition. And if we will not wisely consider the *Lord's doings*, we have reason to stand in awe of that Threatning of *His*, *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up*. Psal. 128. 5.

It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The *Greatness* of it; and the *strangeness* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenness* and *Easiness* of it.

The *Greatness* of it; it was a great Deliverance, from the greatest Fears, and from the greatest Dangers; the apparent and imminent Danger of the saddest *Thralldom* and *Bondage*, *Civil* and *Spiritual*; both of *Soul* and *Body*.

And it was brought about in a very extraordinary manner, and by very strange means: Whether we consider the *greatness* and *difficulty* of the Enterprize; or the closeness and *secrecy* of the Design, which must of necessity be communicated at least to the *Chief* of those who were to assist and engage in it: Especially the *Estates* of the *United Provinces*, who were then in so much danger themselves, and wanted more than their own Forces for their own Defence and Security: a kindness never to be forgotten by the *English Nation*. And besides all this, the Difficulties and Disappointments which happen'd, after the Design was open and manifest, from the uncertainties of *Wind* and *Weather*, and many other *Accidents* impossible to be foreseen and prevented. And yet in Conclusion a strange concurrence of all things on all sides, to bring the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy Issue and Effect.

And we must not here forget the many *Worthies* of our *Nation*, who did so generously run all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the preservation of our *Religion*, and the asserting of our ancient *Laws* and *Liberties*.

These are all strange and unusual means; but which is stranger yet, the very Counsels and Methods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any Counsel and Contrivance of our own could have done it. For even the *Jesuits*, those formal *Politicians* by *Book* and *Rule*, without any consideration or true knowledge of the Temper, and Interest, and other Circumstances of the People they were designing upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I say, the *Jesuits*, who for so long a time, and for so little reason, have

have affected the Reputation of the deepest and craftiest *States-men* in the World, have upon this great Occasion, and when their whole *Kingdom of Darknes* lay at stake, by a more than ordinary *insatiation* and *blindness*, so outwitted and over-reach'd themselves in their own Counsels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our Deliverance from the Destruction which they had designed to bring upon us, than all our wisest and best Friends could have done.

And then, if we consider further, how *sudden* and surprising it was, so that we could hardly believe it when it was accomplish'd: and like the Children of *Israel*, when the Lord turned again the Captivity of *Zion*, we were like them that dream. When all things were driving on furiously, and in great haste, then God gave an unexpected check to the Designs of Men, and stop'd them in their full *carriere*. Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few Months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of our Fears and Troubles? God hath at once scatter'd all our Fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatness and suddenness of our Deliverance. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And lastly, If we consider the cheapness and easiness of this Deliverance. All this was done without a *Battel*, and almost without *Blood*. All the danger is, lest we should loath it, and grow sick of it, because it was so very easie. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a *Red Sea* of Blood, we would have valued it more. But this surely is great wantonness, and whatever we think of it, one of the highest provocations imaginable: For there can hardly be a fouler and blacker Ingratitude towards Almighty God, than to slight so great a Deliverance, only because it came to us so easily, and hath cost us so very cheap.

I will mention but one Circumstance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our observation. That God seems in this last Deliverance, in some sort to have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this *Nation* against all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our *Reformation*. Our wonderful Deliverance from the formidable *Spanish Invasion* design'd against us, happen'd in the Year 1588. And now just a hundred years after, God was pleas'd to bring about this last great and most happy Deliverance. That horrid *Gunpowder Conspiracy*, without *Precedent*, and without *Parallel*, was design'd to have been executed upon the *Fifth Day of November*; the same Day upon which his *Hightness* the Prince of Orange landed the *Forces* here in *England*, which he brought hither for our Rescue. So that this is a Day every way worthy to be solemnly set apart and joyfully celebrated by this Church and Nation, throughout all Generations; as the fittest of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great Deliverances which God hath wrought for Us, from Popery, and its inseparable Companion, *Arbitrary Power*. And we may then say with the *Holy Psalmist*, *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoyce and be glad in it.*

Psalm. 118.
23, 24.

Secondly, As the Case in the Text is much like Ours, so let us take heed that the Doom and Sentence there be not so too. If after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespasses, and since God hath punish'd us less than our Iniquities did deserve; should we again break his Commandments, and joyn in affinity with the People of these Abominations, would He not be angry with us till he had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? What could we in reason expect after all this, but utter ruin and destruction?

destruction: We may here apply, as St. Paul does, God's dealing with the People of *Israel*, to the Times of the *Gospel*; for he speaks of it as an *Example* and *Admonition* to all Ages to the end of the World. *Now these things*, ^{1 Cor. 10: 6, 7, 9, 10, 11.} says the *Apostle*, *were our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them, &c. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents.* For the explication of this *passage* we must have recourse to the *History*, which gives this account of it. *And the People spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the Wilderness?* &c. impeaching God and his Servant *Moses*, as if by this Deliverance they had put them into a much worse condition than they were in when they were in *Egypt*. *And the Lord sent fiery Serpents among the People, and they bit the People, and much People of Israel died.* But how was this a tempting of Christ? *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted,* that is, let not us, now under the *Gospel*, tempt our Saviour and Deliverer; as the *Israelites* did theirs, by slighting that great Deliverance, and by speaking against God, and against *Moses*. *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer.* And how far this may concern Us, and all others, to the end of the World, who shall tempt Christ, the great Patron and Deliverer of his Church, and murmur without cause, as the *Israelites* did, at the Deliverances which He works for them, and against the Instruments of it, the *Apostle* tells us in the next Words: *Now all these things happened unto them for Ensamples, or Types; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come. Let us not tempt Christ;* who is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his Church from the Tyranny of *Antichrist*. ^{v. 11.}

To draw now towards a Conclusion; I will comprehend my Advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few Words as I can.

Let us use this great Deliverance which God hath given us, [*such a Deliverance as this*] from our Enemies, and from the Hand of all that hate us; not by using Them as they would have done Us, had we fallen under their Power, with great Insolence, and Rage, and Cruelty; but with great Moderation and Clemency, making as few Examples of Severity as will be consistent with our future security from the like attempts upon our Religion and Laws: And even in the Execution of Justice upon the greatest Offenders, let us not give so much countenance to the ill Examples which have been set of Extravagant Fines and Punishments, as to imitate those Patterns which with so much reason we abhor; no, not in the Punishment of the Authors of them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be so wise, as not to forfeit the Fruits of this Deliverance, and to hinder our selves of the Benefit and Advantage of it, by Breaches and Divisions among our selves. As we have no reason to desire it, so I think we can hardly ever hope to understand Popery better, and the cruel Designs of it, than we do already, both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this Nation, and likewise from that dismal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in One of our Neighbour Nations, which hath long pretended to the Profession of the most refin'd and moderate Popery in the World; but hath now at last shewed it self in its true Colours, and in the perfection of a persecuting Spirit; and have therein given us a most sad and deplorable Instance, of a Religion corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be possible, is worse than None.

And since, by the undeserved Mercy of God to us, we have, upon such easie terms in comparison, escap'd their Rage and Fury; let us now

at length resolve, never to join in *Affinity with the People of these Abominations*; since our *Alliances* with them by *Marriage* have had so fatal an Influence, both upon the *publick Peace* and *Tranquility* of the *Nation*, and upon the *Welfare* also of *private Families*. I have known *Many* Instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw *One* that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those *Protestant Families* in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful *Matches* have been made: Not that such *Marriages* are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent *Danger* and *Temptation* to which those of our *Church* and *Religion* that enter into them do evidently expose themselves, of being seduc'd from their Religion; not by the good Arguments which the other can offer to that purpose, but by the ill Arts which they have the confidence and the conscience to make use of in the making of *Profelytes*.

And let us pay our most hearty and thankful Acknowledgments, chiefly and in the first Place to *Almighty God*, the Blessed *Author* of this *Deliverance*, and under *Him*, to that happy *Instrument*, whom God hath been pleased, in great pity to this sinful and unworthy *Nation*, to raise up on purpose for it, his Highness the Prince of *Orange*; and to that end did in his All-wise Providence lay the Foundation of our then future *Deliverance*, in that *auspicious Match* which was concluded here in *England*, about eleven years ago, between this Renowned *Prince* and our Excellent *Princess*.

This is that most Illustrious House of *Nassau and Orange*, which God hath so highly honoured above all the *Families* of the Earth, to give a Check to the *Two* great aspiring *Monarchies* of the *West*, and bold *Attempters* upon the *Liberties* of *Europe*: To the *One*, in the last Age; and to the *Other*, in the present. As if the *Princes* of this Valiant and Victorious *Line* had been of the *Race* of *Hercules*, born to rescue Mankind from Oppression, and to quell Monsters.

And lastly, let us beseech Almighty God, all whose Ways and Works are perfect, That he would establish that which he hath wrought, and still carry it on to further and greater perfection. Which, after such an *Earnest* of his Favour and Good Will to us, we have no reason to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own *sickleness* and *inconstancy*, disgusting the *Deliverance* now it is come, which we so earnestly desired before it came; if by our ingrateful *Murmurings* and *Discontents*, by our own foolish *Heats* and *Animosities*, kindled and carried on by the ill Designs of some, working upon the tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious pretences of *Conscience* and *Loyalty*: I say, if by some or all these ways we do not refuse the Blessing which God now offers, and defeat and frustrate the merciful Design of this wonderful Revolution; God will still rejoice over us, to do us good, and think thoughts of Peace towards us, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give us an expected end of our long Troubles and Confusions.

But if we will not know, in this our day, the things which belong to our Peace, our Destruction will then be of our selves; and there will be no need that God should be angry with us, for we shall be undone by our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way and Means of our being saved; and so be angry with one another till we be consumed. Which God, of his infinite Goodness, give us all the Grace and Wisdom to prevent; for his Mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with Thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and ever, Amen.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

Of Forgiveness of Injuries, and against Revenge.

Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*,
March 8. 1688.

Matthew v. 44.

But I say unto you, love your Enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

THE Gospel hath promised forgiveness of Sins to us upon *two* Conditions; That we sincerely repent of the Sins which we have committed against God; and, That we heartily forgive to Men the Injuries and Offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I shall at this time, by God's Assistance, treat of the latter of these, from the *Words* which I have recited to you; which are part of our *Saviour's* excellent *Sermon upon the Mount*. In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Natural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of greater perfection, than either the Law of *Moses* or the *Natural Law*, in their largest extent, did contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce* except only in case of *Adultery*; and likewise *Revenge*; none of which were forbidden either by the *Law of Nature*, or by the *Law* which was given by *Moses*.

And to these *Prohibitions* our *Blessed Saviour* adds several new *Precepts* of greater perfection than any Laws that were extant before. *But I say unto you, love your Enemies*. The *Jewish Law* commanded them to *love their Neighbour*, meaning their Brethren and those of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us to *love our Enemies*, hath in the most emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love *all Men*. For if any were to be excluded from our Charity, none so likely to be so as our Enemies. So that after a Command to love our Enemies it was needless to name any others, because Men are naturally apt to love those that love them.

I say unto you, love your Enemies; here the inward affection is requir'd. *Bless them that curse you*; here outward Civility and Affability are requir'd, in opposition to rude and uncivil Language; for so *blessing* and *curse* do in *Scripture* frequently signifie. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you*. These are the highest Expressions of Enmity that can be, *Calumny* and *Cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these *two* tenderest Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to secure the sincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to express it

by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I say, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to dissemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for our selves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of Him for others.

You see what is the Duty here requir'd; That we bear a sincere affection to our most malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon occasion to give real testimony of it.

And because this may seem a hard Duty, and not so easie to be reconciled either to our Inclination or our Reason; I shall endeavour to shew, that this Law is not only reasonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more easie and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary: And that upon *four* Considerations; which I shall endeavour to represent with their just advantage, and so as may, I hope, not only convince our Judgments of the reasonableness of this Precept, but likewise bend and sway our Wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we consider the nature of the *Act* here requir'd, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a meer Passion, but under the government of our Reason, is the most natural, and easie, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in Humane Nature: Whereas *Ill-will*, and *Hatred*, and *Revenge*, are very troublesome and vexatious Passions. Both the devising of mischief, and the accomplishment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneasie: and the consequences of it many times pernicious to our selves. The very design of Revenge is troublesome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The Man that meditates it is always restless, his very Soul is stung, swells and boils, is in Pain and Anguish, hath no ease, no enjoyment of it self so long as this Passion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with some present pleasure, but that pleasure is unreasonable and brutish, momentary and short, like a flash of Lightning, which vanisheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly said that Revenge is sweet, but to a calm and considerate Mind, Patience and Forgiveness are sweeter, and do afford a much more rational and solid and durable Pleasure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodness are a far more pleasing and delightful spectacle, than of our Rage and Cruelty. And no sort of thought does usually haunt Men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in way of Revenge.

Besides that the consequences of this Passion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our selves. For the revenge of one Injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the same reason to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endless circulation of Injuries and Revenges. So that whoever seeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the issue take it upon himself, and whilst he thinks to transfer the Injury which he hath received from him that did it, he doubles it upon himself.

Such, and so great are the troubles and inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: but *there is no torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently says. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no gudge or ill-will, no thought of displeasure or revenge towards any Man, is the easiest posture, the most pleasant state of the Mind. So that if not for their sakes, yet for our own, we should *love our Enemies, and do good to them that hate us*; because to be thus affected towards all Men, is as great a kindness to our selves as it is Charity to others.

II. If we consider the qualification of the *Object*; it is our *Enemy* whom we are requir'd to love. In whom though there be something that is justly disgustful, yet there is something also that is lovely; and if we persist in our kindness to him, notwithstanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a sincere and firm friendship.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our selves personal enmity towards us is one of the most inconvenient qualities that a Man can have, but not therefore the worst in it self. If we could be impartial and lay aside prejudice, we might perhaps discern several very lovely qualities in him who hates us: And Virtue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an Enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not so great and inexcusable a fault, as we apprehend; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that degree, nor so altogether without cause, as we imagine; possibly we have provok'd him, or by his own mistake, or through the malicious representation of others he may be induc'd to think so: And are not we our selves liable to the like misapprehensions concerning others? of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and asham'd: and so may he, and then his enmity will cease, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wish in the like case that others would have with us.

At the worst, though never so sore and causeless an Enemy, though never so bad a Man, yet he is a Man, and as such, hath something in him which the blindest Passion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the same Nature with our selves, which we cannot hate, or despise, without hatred and contempt of our selves. Let a man's faults be what they will, they do not destroy his Nature, and make him cease to be a Man.

The two great Foundations of Love are *Relation* and *Likeness*. No one thing, says Tully, is so like, so equal to another, as one Man is to another. What difference soever there may be between us and another Man, yea, though he be our Enemy, yet he is still like us in the main; and perhaps, but too like us in that for which we find so much fault with him, a proneness to offer Affronts and Injuries.

And there is an essential *Relation*, as well as *Likeness*, between one Man and another; which nothing can ever dissolve, because it is founded in that which no Man can divest himself of, in *Human Nature*. So far is it from being true, which Mr. Hobbs asserts as the fundamental Principle of his Politics, That Men are naturally in a state of War and Enmity with one another; that the contrary Principle, laid down by a much deeper and wiser Man, I mean Aristotle, is most certainly true, That Men are naturally a kin and friends to each other. Some unhappy Accidents and Occasions may make Men Enemies, but naturally every Man is friend to another: and that is the surest and most unalterable reason of things which is founded in Nature, not that which springs from mutable Accidents and Occasions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a Man, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an Enemy.

Consider farther that an Enemy, even whilst he is exercising his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which though they do not proceed from kindness, yet in truth are Benefits. The malicious Censures of our Enemies, if we make a right use of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the Civilities of our best Friends. We can easily afford, nay the wisest Men can hardly forbear, to love a Flatterer; to embrace him, and to take him into our bosom; and yet an open Enemy is a thousand times better and less dangerous than he. It is good for many Men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occasion

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occasion of reforming those faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the Freedom, I had almost said would have had the Friendship, to have told them of.

But what if after all, this Enemy of ours, this hated Man, prove to be one of our best Friends? For so reconciled Enemies usually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and Kindness will. An obstinate Goodness is apt to conquer even the worst of Men. It is hardly in the nature of Man to withstand the kindness of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our Enemy. After a Man hath done the greatest injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the first opportunity taken to oblige him, is so very surprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worst disposition, and to melt down the hardest Temper. So that we should love our Enemies, if not for what they are at present, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by these means they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we consider the Excellency and Generosity of the thing it self. *To love our Enemies, and to do good to them that hate us*, is the Perfection of Goodness, and the Advancement of it to its highest pitch. It is the most excellent and perfect act of the greatest and most perfect of all Graces and Virtues, I mean *Charity*; which by St. Paul is call'd *the Bond of Perfection*; and by St. James, *the Perfect and the Royal Law*: because it inspires Men with a greatness of Mind fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous Goodness and Clemency, even towards great Enemies and Offenders, so far as is consistent with the Publick Good. Love for Love is but Justice and Gratitude; Love for no Love is Favour and Kindness; but Love for Hatred and Enmity is a most Divine Temper, a steady and immutabbe Goodness that is not to be stirr'd by provocation, and so far from being conquer'd, that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and Enmity do not extinguish Love, what can? This is Goodness indeed; not only without Merit and Obligation, without Invitation or Motive; but against all reasonable Expectation, and in despite of all Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return Good for Evil and Love for Hatred, is one of the greatest arguments of a great Mind, and of deep wisdom and consideration: For naturally our *first* Inclinations and Thoughts towards our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but our *second* and wiser Thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveness is much more generous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another Man than this, that when the Injury began on his part, the Kindness should begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more desirable conquest to *overcome evil with good*, than with evil. By *this*, we can only conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the *other*, we certainly Conquer our selves, and perhaps our Enemy too; overcoming him in the noblest manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually subduing him to be our Friend. This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wise *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meer dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wise Delay; without ever striking a stroke, or shedding one Drop of Blood, to vanquish an Enemy, and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battel.

Revenge is blind and rash, and does always proceed from impotency and weakness of Mind. 'Tis Anger that spurs Men on to it; and Anger is certainly one of the foolishhest Passions of Humane Nature, and which commonly

ly betrays Men to the most imprudent and unreasonable things. So Solomon ^{Pro. 14. 29.} observes, *He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly*; and again, *Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools*: But to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of great Wisdom; and to forgive it, of a great Mind: So the same *Wise-man* tells us, *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City*. ^{Ecclef. 7. 9.} It is a greater thing, in case of great Provocation, to calm a Man's own Spirit, than to storm and take a strong City. ^{Pro. 16. 32.}

Whereas the Angry Man loseth and lets fall the government of himself, and lays the Reins upon the Neck of the *Wild Beast*, his own brutish Appetite and Passion; which hurries him on first to Revenge, and then to Repentance for the Folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying so unreasonable a Passion. For it very seldom happens that any Man executes an act of Revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is sorry for it, and wisheth he had not done it: Whereas Patience and Forgiveness do wisely prevent both the Mischief to others, and the Trouble to our selves, which is usually consequent upon Revenge.

IV. If we consider the Perfection and Prevalency of the *Examples* which the *Gospel* proposeth to us, to allure and engage us to the Practice of this Duty. And they are the *Examples* of *God* himself, and of the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

I. The Example of *God* himself. The *Scripture* doth frequently set before us the goodness of *God's* common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern. And this is the Argument whereby our Blessed *Saviour* presseth the Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verse* immediately after it; *That ye may be the Children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his Rain to fall on the just and the unjust*. ^{Verse 45.} The same Argument *Seneca* also urgeth to the same purpose. *How many (says he) are unworthy of the Light, and yet the Day visits them? And (speaking of the Gods, They bestow (says he) their Benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those who make a bad construction and use of their kindness.* And almost in the very Words of our *Saviour*, *Etiam sceleratis Sol oritur, &c. The Sun riseth even upon the most vile and profligate Persons, and the Seas are open to Pirates.*

Thus is *God* affected towards those who are guilty of the greatest provocations towards Him. He bestows upon them the Gifts of his Common Providence; and not only so, but is ready to forgive innumerable Offences to them for *Christ's* sake. This Pattern the *Apostle* proposeth to our imitation, *Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you: Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear Children*. ^{Eph. 4. 32. Chap. 5. 1.} This temper and disposition of Mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the Divine Nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of Beings? And so our *B. Saviour* concludes this Argument, in the last *Verse* of this Chapter, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, which *St. Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful*. So that in that very thing which we think to be so hard and difficult, you see that we have Perfection it self for our Pattern. And this *Example* ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reason there is, why we should do thus to one another, than why *God* should do thus to us. Our Offences against *God* are more and greater, than any Man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: Besides, that there are many Considerations which ought to tye up our hands, and may reasonably restrain us from falling furiously upon one another, which can have no place at all in *God*. We may

may justly fear, that the consequence of our Revenge may return upon our selves, and that it may come to be our own case to stand in need of Mercy and Forgiveness from others: And therefore out of necessary caution and prudence, we should take heed not to set any bad example in this kind, lest it should recoil upon our selves. We who stand so much in need of forgiveness our selves, ought in all reason to be very easie to forgive others. But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real injury or suffering. God can never stand in need of pity or forgiveness; and yet of his own meer Goodness, without any interest or design, how *slow* is he to *anger*, and how *ready* to *forgive*?

And which comes yet nearer to us, there is also the *Example* of the *Son of God*, our *Blessed Saviour*; who in our Nature, and in case of the greatest Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practise this Virtue to the height: And all this for our *sakes*, as well as for our *Example*. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himself submitted to with the greatest patience and constancy of Mind, in our *stead*, and wholly for our advantage.

He *render'd good for evil* to all Mankind, and shew'd greater *Love* to us, whilst we were Enemies to Him, than ever any Man did to his Friend.

He *pray'd* for those *that despitefully used him and persecuted him*. And this, not upon cool consideration, after the injury was done, and the Pain of his Sufferings was over; but whilst the Sense and Smart of them was upon him, and in the very Agony and Bitterness of Death: In the height of all his Anguish, he pour'd out his Soul an Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they shed it; pleading with God, in the behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuse that was possible to be made for their *Malice*, that is, their *Ignorance*; and spending his last Breath in that most charitable Prayer for them, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

The last Declaration which he made of his mind, was *Love* to his *Enemies*; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd was an earnest Request to God for the *Forgiveness* of his *Persecutors* and *Murderers*.

So that if any *Example* ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our *Blessed Saviour* should; since the Injuries which he suffer'd have saved us from suffering, and the greatest *Blessing* and *Happiness* that ever befel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example*: And then with what confidence, nay with what conscience, can we pretend to share in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Vertues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive Kindness and Charity of the Son of God to the sinful Sons of Men, after all our bitterest Enmity towards him, and most cruel and injurious Usage of him; and all this Charity exercis'd towards us, whilst he was under the actual sense and suffering of these things: and yet not be provok'd by an Example so admirable in it self, and of such mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewise*?

But notwithstanding the power of these *Arguments* to perswade to this *Duty*, I must not dissemble some *Objections* which are, I believe in many of your minds against it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give some satisfaction. And they are these:

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does not seem so well to agree with another of our *Blessed Saviour's*, in another *Evangelist*, *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Here our *Blessed Saviour* seems not

Luke 17.
3, 4.

to require Forgiveness, unless he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it: but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive those who are so far from repenting of their Enmity, that they still pursue it, and exercise it upon us. Thus our *Lord* teacheth us, and thus *He* himself practised towards his *Persecutors*.

But this appearance of Contradiction will quickly vanish, if we consider that *Forgiveness* is sometimes taken chiefly for *abstaining from Revenge*; and so far we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilst they continue so, and though they do not repent: And not only so, but we are also to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, especially of common Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept in the *Text*. But sometimes *Forgiveness* does signifie a *perfect Reconciliation* to those that have offended us, so as to take them again into our *Friendship*; which they are by no means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it aside. And this is plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

2. It is further objected, That this seems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous consequence to our selves; because by bearing one Injury so patiently, and forgiving it so easily, we invite more; and not only tempt our Enemy to go on, but others also by his Example to do the like: Which will make ill natur'd Men to provoke us on purpose, with a crafty design to wrest benefits from us: For what better Trade can a man drive, than to gain Benefits in exchange for Injuries?

To this I answer *three* things:

First, It is to be feared that there are but few so very good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Perhaps, of those that call themselves *Christians*, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one against him, that this Enemy of his will take the first opportunity to take his Revenge upon him.

Secondly, It is also on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are so prodigiously bad, as to make so barbarous a return for the unexpected kindness of a generous Enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this Duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it should fall out otherwise, yet this would not be reason enough to discourage our goodness, especially since the kindness which we do to our Friends is liable almost to an equal Objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our Enemies: it having been often seen that great Benefits, and such as are beyond requital, instead of making a man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

Thirdly, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Precept, that our goodness should be blind and void of all prudence and discretion, but that it should be so managed as to make our Enemy sensible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and so, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reason for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in such a manner as may be most effectual, both to reclaim the Offender, and likewise to secure our selves against future and further Injuries.

3. *Lastly*, It is objected, What can we do more to our best Friends, than to love them and bless them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our Enemies and our Friends?

Yes surely; and so we may, notwithstanding this Precept: For there are degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of several rates and sizes. Those

of the first rate we may with reason bestow upon our Friends, and with those of a second or third rate there is all the reason in the World why our Enemies should be very well contented. Besides that we may abstain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wish him and do him good; and yet it will not presently be necessary that we should take him into our bosom, and treat and trust him as our intimate and familiar Friend. For every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our Friend; much less one that hath been our Enemy, and perhaps is so still. There must be a great change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we must have had long experience of him, before it will be fit, if ever it be so, to take him into our Friendship.

All that now remains is to make some *Inferences* from the Discourse which I have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they shall be these *four*:

- I. I. If we think it so very difficult to demean our selves towards our Enemies, as the *Christian* Religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to our selves. One of the first Principles of Humane Wisdom, in the conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, To have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be possible, to our selves. St. Paul lays a great stress upon this, and presseth it very earnestly. For after he had forbidden Revenge, *Recompence to no man evil for evil*. As if he were very sensible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviseth in the next words, to prevent, if it be possible, the occasions of Revenge, *If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*: That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any man. And that for two weighty Reasons.

Rom. 12. 17.

V. 18.

The *first* I have already intimated; because it is so very hard to behave our selves towards Enemies as we ought. This we shall find to be a difficult Duty to Flesh and Blood; and it will require great Wisdom, and Consideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of his Command: For the fewer Enemies we have, the less occasion will there be of contesting this hard Point with our selves.

And the *other* Reason is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, because Enemies will come of themselves, and let a man do what he can, he shall have some. Friendship is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will spring up of themselves without our care and toil. The *Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the *Devil*, will sow these *Tares in the night*, and when we least discern it will scatter the Seeds of Discord and Enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the Envy, or the Malice, or the Mistakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to see what care and pains some men will take, to provoke Mankind against them; how they will lay about them, and snatch at opportunities to make themselves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occasion slip by them: But all this care and fear surely is needless; we may safely trust an ill-natur'd World, that we shall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make personal Enemies to himself; for these are the *forest* and the *surest* of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will sit hardest upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greatest, and yet they are many times more easily forgiven, than those which are done to particular Persons.

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For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Humane Society, do not so sensibly touch and sting Men, as personal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in passion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are so. Heat of Prosecution belongs to particular Persons; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and desire to revenge them, and diligence to set on and sharpen the *Law*, that is chiefly to be dreaded: And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almost as few private as publick *Acts* of *Oblivion* pass'd in the World; and they commonly pass as slowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almost quite lost.

II. Secondly, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others? To those who never disobliged us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed; to those more especially, who stand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural Kindred, and to our spiritual Brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by the common Bond of Christianity; and lastly, to our Benefactors, and those who have been before-hand with us in obligation: For all these are so many special Ties and Endearments of Men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Justice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all these and our Enemies, we ought to make a very wide and sensible difference, in our Carriage and Kindness towards them. And if we do not do so, we represent our *Saviour* as an unreasonable Lawgiver, and do perversely interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reasonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindness is here required towards our Enemies, it is certain that so much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deserved at our hands; nothing being more certain than that our *Blessed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any *Precept* of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Justice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the least to the common Reason of Mankind.

III. Thirdly, Hence we learn the Excellency and the Reasonableness of the *Christian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty so high in things which do so directly tend to the Perfection of *Humane Nature*, and to the Peace of *Humane Society*, and which if all things be rightly consider'd, are most agreeable to the clearest and best Reason of Mankind: So that those things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by some few of the wiser sort, as Heroical Instances of Goodness, and above the common rate of Humanity, are now by the *Christian Religion* made the indispensible Duties of all Mankind. And the *Precepts* of no other Religion, that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced Humane Nature so much above it self, and are so well calculated for the Peace and Happiness of the World, as the *Precepts* of the *Christian Religion* are: for they strictly forbid the doing of Injuries, by way of prevention; and in case they happen, they endeavour to put a present stop to the progress of them, by so severely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it must be acknowledg'd to be a very untoward *Objection* against the Excellency and the Efficacy of the *Christian Religion*, that the Practice of so many *Christians* is so unequal to the Perfection of these *Precepts*. For who is there in the Changes and Revolutions of Humane Affairs, and when the Wheel of Providence turns them uppermost, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will give them any Quarter? Nay, that

that does not greedily seize upon the first opportunities of Revenge, and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a sudden stoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our Boasts of the Excellency of our Religion, where is the practice of it? This, I confess, is a terrible *Objection* indeed; and I must intreat of you, *my Brethren*, to help me to the best Answer to it: Not by any nice *Distinctions* and *Speculations* about it, but by the careful and honest Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* against *Philosophy*, that many that were Philosophers in their Opinions were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never thought by wise men to be a good *Objection* against *Philosophy*. And unless we will lay more weight upon the *Objections* against Religion, and press them harder than we think it reasonable to do in any other Case, we must acknowledge likewise, that this *Objection* against Religion is of no force. Men do not cast off the *Art of Physick*, because many *Physicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not themselves follow those Prescriptions which they think fit to give to others; and there is a plain reason for it, because their swerving from their own Rules doth not necessarily signify that their Rules are not good, but only that their Appetites are unruly, and too hard and headstrong for their Reason: Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules may be very reasonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. The *fourth* and *last Inference* from this whole Discourse shall be this, That being convinced by what hath been said upon this Argument, of the Reasonableness of this Duty, we would resolve upon the Practice of it, when ever there is occasion offer'd for it in the course of our Lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great occasion for it: I shall only say, that whenever there is so, nothing can be tied more strictly upon us than this Duty is.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confirmation to me, to see the *Humanity* of the *Protestant Religion*, so plainly discovering it self, upon so many occasions, in the practice of the Professors of it. And setting aside all other advantages which our Religion hath been evidently shewn to have above *Popery* in point of Reason and Argument, I cannot for my life but think that to be the best Religion which makes the best Men, and from the Nature of its Principles is apt to make them so; most kind and merciful, and charitable; and most free from Malice, and Revenge, and Cruelty.

And therefore our *Blessed Saviour*, who knew what was in man better than any Man that ever was, knowing our great reluctancy and backwardness to the practice of this Duty, hath urged it upon us by such forcible and almost violent Arguments, that if we have any tenderness for our selves, we cannot refuse Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appease God towards us, so long as we our selves are implacable to Men; *Verse 23d. of this Chapter, If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift, before the Altar, and go thy way: first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* To recommend this Duty effectually to us, He gives it a preference to all the *positive Duties* of Religion: *First go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Till this Duty be discharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great reason declare it to be a necessary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be in Love and

Charity

Charity with our Neighbours ; because this is a *Moral Duty*, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *positive* part of Religion, such as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to God ; especially since in this *Blessed Sacrament* of *Christ's* Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveness of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us : Which how can we hope for from God, if we our selves be not ready to forgive one another ?

He shall have judgment without mercy, says *St. James*, who hath shewed no mercy. And in that excellent *Form of Prayer* which our Lord himself hath given us, He hath taught us so to ask Forgiveness of God, as not to expect it from Him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practise this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this *Petition* to God, [*Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that Trespase against us* ;] we send up a terrible *Imprecation* against our selves, and do in effect beg of God not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our Minds, our *Blessed Saviour* immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this *Petition*, above all the rest ; For if, says He, *ye forgive men their trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But if ye forgive not men their trespases, neither will your Father forgive your trespases.* Matth. 6. 14, 15.

And our *Saviour* hath likewise in his *Gospel* represented to us, both the reasonableness of this Duty, and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting Parable, delivered by him to this purpose : Concerning a *wicked Servant*, who, when his Lord had but just before forgiven him a vast Debt of *ten thousand Talents*, took his poor *Fellow-servant* by the throat, and, notwithstanding his humble Submission and earnest Intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to Prison for a trifling Debt of an *hundred Pence*. And the *Application* which he makes of this Parable, at the end of it, is very terrible, and such as ought never to go out of our Minds ; So likewise, says He, *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye do not from your hearts forgive every one his brother his trespases.* One might be apt to think at first view, that this Parable was over-done, and wanted something of a due *Decorum* ; it being hardly credible, that a Man after he had been so mercifully and generously dealt withal, as upon his humble Request to have so huge a Debt so freely forgiven, should whilst the memory of so much Mercy was fresh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his *Fellow-servant*, who had made the same humble Submission and Request to him which he had done to his Lord, with so much roughness and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a Sum. This, I say, would hardly seem credible ; did we not see in experience how very unreasonable and unmerciful some Men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from God, when they will shew none to Men. Mat. 18. 23. V. 35.

The greatness of the Injuries which are done to us, is the reason commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makest this an Argument why thou canst not forgive thy Brother, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and bethink thy self how many more and much greater Offences thou hast been guilty of against God : Look up to that Just and Powerful Being that is above, and consider well, Whether thou dost not both expect and stand in need of more Mercy and Favour from Him, than thou canst find in thy heart to shew to thine offending Brother ?

We have all certainly great reason to expect that as we use one another, God will likewise deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Christians ? And how hardly are the best of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them ? And this, notwithstanding that all

all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness from God do depend upon it. How strangely inconsistent is our practice and our hope? And what a wide distance is there between our expectations from God, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope so easily to be forgiven, and yet be so hard to forgive?

Would we have God, for *Christ's* sake, to forgive us those numberless and monstrous provocations which we have been guilty of against His Divine Majesty? And shall we not for *His* sake, for whose sake we our selves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be obliged to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and most miserable shall we be to all Eternity, if God do not all this to us, which we think to be so very hard and unreasonable for us to do to one another.

I have sometimes wonder'd how it should come to pass, that so many persons should be so apt to despair of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God to them; especially considering what clear and express Declarations God hath made of his readiness to forgive our greatest Sins and Provocations upon our sincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we shall consider with how much difficulty Men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are perswaded to refrain from flying upon those who have given us any considerable provocation. So that when Men look into themselves, and shall carefully observe the motions of their own minds towards those against whom they have been justly exasperated, they will see but too much reason to think that Forgiveness is no such easie matter.

But our comfort in this case is, That God is not as *Man*; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but *as the Heavens are high above the Earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts*.

And the best way to keep our selves from despairing of God's Mercy and Forgiveness to us, is to be easie to grant Forgiveness to others: And without this, as God hath reason to deny Forgiveness to us, so we our selves have all the reason in the World utterly to despair of it.

M. Aur.
Antoni. l. 7.

It would almost transport a *Christian* to read that admirable Passage of the great *Heathen* Emperor and Philosopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*; *Can the Gods*, says he, *that are Immortal, for the continuance of so many Ages, bear without impatience with such and so many Sinners as have ever been; and not only so, but likewise take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: And dost thou so grievously take on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of those Sinners thy self.*

Ecc. 23. 1,
2, 3, 4.

I will conclude this whole *Discourse* with those weighty and pungent Sayings of the wise Son of *Syrach*, *He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, so shall thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon of the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own Sins?*

Enable us, O Lord, by thy Grace, to practice this excellent and difficult Duty of our Religion: And then, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*: For thy mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ*; to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Obedience, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIV.

The care of our Souls the One thing needful.

Preached before the

King and Queen

A T

HAMPTON-COURT,

April the 14th. 1689.

LUKE X. 42.

But One thing is needful.



IN the accounts of Wise men, one of the first Rules and Measures of Human actions is this, *To regard every thing more or less, according to the degree of its consequence and importance to our happiness.* That which is most necessary to that End ought in all reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things only so far as they are consistent with that great End, and subservient to it.

Our Blessed Saviour here tells us, that *there is one thing needful*, that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: And what *that* is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the Context, and the occasion of these Words, which was briefly this: Our Saviour, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertained at the House of two devout Sisters. The elder, who had the care and management of the Family and the Affairs of it, was employed in making entertainment for such a Guest: The other sat at our Saviour's feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preach'd.

The elder finding her self not able to do all the business alone, desires of our Saviour that he would command her Sister to come and help her. Upon this our Saviour gives her this gentle reprehension, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* And what *that* is, he declares in the next words, *And Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her;* that is, she hath chosen to take care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

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Our Saviour doth not altogether blame *Martha* for her respectful care of Him, but commends her *Sister* for her greater care of her Soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his *Doctrine*, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to His *Person*.

From the *Words* thus explain'd, the *Observation* which I shall make is this :

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is *the one thing necessary*, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This *Observation* seems to be plainly contain'd in the *Text*. I shall handle it as briefly as I can; and then by way of Application shall endeavour to persuade you and my self to mind this *one thing necessary*.

And in speaking to this serious and weighty Argument I shall do these two things;

First, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does consist.

Secondly, To convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

- I. I shall shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the *five* following *Particulars*, in which I think the main business of Religion and the due care of our Souls does consist.

First, In the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

Secondly, In the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

Thirdly, In the constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion.

Fourthly, In avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

Fifthly, In the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Virtues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary Principles and Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good Practice, wherein the life of Religion doth consist. And without this no man can be truly Religious. *Without faith, saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, it is impossible to please God: For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* Now these two expressions of *pleasing God* and *seeking Him*, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signify Religion, or the *Worship* and Service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and persuasion of these two fundamental Principles of all Religion, That *there is a God*, and, That *He will reward those that serve him*: Because unless a man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as Religion.

And

And this knowledge of the necessary *Principles* of Religion our *B. Saviour* calls *Eternal Life*, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says He, *to know thee, the only true God; and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ*, that is, to be rightly instructed John 17. 3. in the knowledge of *the only true God*, and of *his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*: Under which *two* general *Heads* are comprehended all the necessary *Principles* both of the *Natural* and of the *Christian Religion*.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to Salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is requir'd; but only a reachablè disposition and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easie, and lye level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that God *who would have all men to be saved*, hath not provided for the Salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true God and the light of Christianity are shed abroad in the World, all that enjoy the Gospel are, or may be, sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their happiness: unless such care be used, as is in the Church of *Rome*, to *take away the key of knowledge*, and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an unknown Tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable consideration, only it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of Mankind are mad, and have need to be kept in the dark. But supposing men to be allowed those means of knowledge which God affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens Understandings, but in their Wills: Only when men know these things, they must attend to them and consider them; that the light which is in their Understandings may warm their Hearts, and have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls consists in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them: In a more *particular* and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful sins, so far as we can call them to our remembrance; and in a *general* repentance for sins of *Ignorance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exercise whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true Repentance doth not consist only in an humble confession of our sins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them; but chiefly in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, and in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the constant exercise hereof, we are put into a safe condition; provided that we persevere in this holy resolution and course: But if we still retain the love and practice of any known sin, or if after we have taken up these good resolutions we return again to an evil course; this is a clear evidence, either that our Repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are relaps'd into our former state: And then our Souls are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will continue in that dangerous state, till we have renew'd our Repentance and made it good in the following course of our lives.

III. The due care of our Souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, especially at proper times and upon more solemn occasions: By fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the Word of God with reverence and godly fear: By frequenting his Publick Worship, and demeaning our selves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious Majesty of God, who
F f f observes

observes our behaviour and sees into our hearts: And by receiving the B. Sacrament, as often as we have opportunity with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For these are not only outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness. And whoever neglects these Duties of Religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath neither a due sense of God, nor care of himself: For in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earnest design the End, when he neglects the best and most proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our Souls consists also in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the Swords point, and do endanger our Salvation as much as a deep wound in our Body would do our Life: And though such a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful Sin knows the dismal consequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at last: For upon such a provocation God may leave the Sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart to proceed from evil to worse, and from one wickedness to another, till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the World is very pernicious to the Souls of men; because it quenches the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and designs; it tempts men to forsake God and Religion when their worldly interests come in competition with them; and betrays them to fraud, and falshood, and all kind of injustice, and many other hurtful lusts which throw the Soul into perdition.

But besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernible because it hath the face of Piety; and that is *Faction* in Religion: By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Religion either doth not at all, or but very little consist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsistent with several of the most eminent *Christian* Graces and Vertues, as *humility*, *love*, *peace*, *meekness*, and *forbearance* towards those that differ from us; it hath likewise two very great mischiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to Religion and the Souls of men.

First, That it takes such men off from minding the more necessary and essential parts of Religion. They are so zealous about small things, *the tithing of mint and anise and cummin*, that they neglect the weightier things of the *Law*, *Faith* and *Mercy*, and *Judgment*, and the *Love* of God: They spend so much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leisure to mind the things that are necessary: And are so concern'd about little *Speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the Practice of Religion is almost wholly neglected by them: And they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Error and Heresie in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded People! that do not consider that the greatest Heresie in the World is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion: And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding than one fault of his Will.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great Piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very Religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the Out-works of Religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good Christians, but to be of such a Party, and to be listed of such a Church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate and uncharitably to censure all the rest of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very sure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themselves *good Catholicks*, and all others *Hereticks*? And that having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a meer Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any Church in the World that had this phantastical Priviledge belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of Religion will be neglected: Besides, that a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that Spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all Factions, but more especially in those of Religion.

V. The due care of our Souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good life; or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, in *exercising our selves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and Men*. For herein is Religion best seen, in the equal and uniform practice of every part of our Duty: Not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men: Not only in restraining our selves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our Lusts, and governing our Passions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal: He must not only endeavour to secure his Head and Heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have died of it: In like manner, the care of our Souls consists in an universal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: Though we ought to have a more especial regard to those Duties which are more considerable, and wherein Religion doth mainly consist; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chastity* in regard of our selves, *Charity* towards the Poor, *Truth* and *Justice*, *Goodness* and *Kindness* towards all men: But then no other *Grace* and *Vertue*, though of an inferiour rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what Instances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an easie business and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and industry

dusttry will serve for this purpose: To master and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Passions under the command and government of our Reason, and to attain to a good degree of every Christian Grace and Vertue: That *Faith* and *Hope* and *Charity*; *Humility* and *Meekness* and *Patience* may all have their perfect work; and that, as St. James says, we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good Christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very short and easie business, and to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it: Which is so far from being the true Notion of Christian Faith, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very Definition of *Presumption*. For the Bible plainly teacheth us, that unless our Faith work by Charity, and purifie our hearts, and reform our lives; unless like Abraham's Faith it be perfected by works, it is but a dead Faith, and will in no wise avail to our Justification and Salvation. And our B. Saviour, the great Author and finisher of our Faith, hath no where, that I know of, said one word to this purpose, That Faith separated from Obedience and a good Life will save any man: But He hath said very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiseth Blessedness to none, but those who live in the practice of those Christian Graces and Vertues which are particularly mention'd by Him in the beginning of his excellent Sermon upon the Mount; of *Humility*, and *Repentance*, and *Meekness*, and *Righteousness*, and *Mercifulness*, and *Purity*, and *Peaceableness*, and *Patience* under Persecution and Sufferings for Righteousness sake. And afterwards in the same Sermon, Not every one, saith He, that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in heaven. And again, Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a Rock. And afterwards, he tells us, that whosoever builds his hopes of Eternal Happiness upon any other foundation, than the Faith of the Gospel and the Practice of its Precepts, doth build his house upon the Sand; which when it comes to be tried by the Rain and the Winds, will fall; and the fall of it will be great. And elsewhere; If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. And he does very severely check the vain confidence and presumption of those, who will needs rely upon Him for Salvation without keeping his Commandments; Why call ye me, says He, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Does any man think that he can be saved without loving God and Christ? And this, saith St. John, is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments: and again, He that saith I know him, and by the same reason, he that saith I love him, and keepeth not his Commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. If ye love me, saith our B. Lord, keep my Commandments: And again, He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.

Does any man think, that any but the Children of God shall be heirs of Eternal Life? Hear then what St. John saith, Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous: And again, In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God.

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the Bible, from the beginning of it to the end, If thou dost well, saith God to Cain, shalt thou not be accepted? And again, Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. And in the Gospel, when the young man came to our Saviour

Matth. 5. 3, 4.
&c.

Matth. 7. 21.

V. 24.

V. 26, 27.

Joh. 13. 17.

Luke 6. 46.

1 Joh. 5. 3.

1 Joh. 2. 4.

Joh. 14. 15.

V. 21.

1 Joh. 3. 7.

V. 10.

Gen. 3. 7.

Isa. 3. 10, 11.

Saviour to be instructed by Him *what good thing he should do that he might* inherit eternal life, our Lord gives him this short and plain advice, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* And in the very last Chapter of the Bible we find this solemn declaration, *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates into the City,* that is, into Heaven, which the Apostle to the Hebrews calls the *City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* So vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual Faith, without holiness and obedience of Life.

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to convince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of minding Religion and our Souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean that it is so in order to some End, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessities of Life, without which men cannot subsist and live in a tolerable condition in this World: And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happiness being our chief End, whatever is necessary to *that* is more necessary than any thing else; and in comparison of *that*, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

II.

Now to convince men of the necessity of Religion, I shall briefly shew, That it is a certain way to happiness: That it is certain that there is no other way but this: And that if we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

First, That Religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have God's express Declaration and Promise, the best assurance that can be. He that cannot lye hath promised *eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour immortality.* All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable is promised to us upon the terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* A mighty reward for a little service; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days: A happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

Secondly, 'Tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, *That if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if by the spirit we mortifie the deeds of the flesh, we shall live:* That without holiness no man shall see the Lord: And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of *Covetousness, or Adultery, or Malice, or Revenge, shall not enter into the Kingdom of God:* And we have reason to believe Him concerning the terms of this happiness, and the means of attaining it, by whose favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it.

And if God had not said it in his Word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only a condition of our happiness, but a necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purg'd from their Lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devilish Passions of *Malice, and Envy, and Revenge,* before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with him *who is love, and dwells in love.*

Thirdly, If we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable. The Word of Truth hath said it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if God

God should hold his hand, and should inflict no positive torment upon sinners, yet they could not spare themselves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked Life which they had led in this World, and the Stings of their own Consciences must necessarily make them miserable, whenever their own Thoughts are let loose upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they shall have nothing either of pleasure or business to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those Miseries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be necessary for us to mind Religion; without which we can neither attain that Happiness, nor escape those Miseries.

All that now remains, is to perswade you and my self seriously to mind this *one thing* necessary. And to this end, I shall apply my Discourse to two sorts of Persons; those who are remiss in a matter of so great concernment, and those who are grossly careless, and mind it not at all.

First, To those who are remiss in a matter of such vast concernment: Who mind the business of Religion in some degree, but not so heartily and vigorously as a matter of such infinite consequence doth require and deserve.

And here I fear the very best are greatly defective; and so much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the necessity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man shall ever be admitted into the mansions of the Blessed: They believe likewise, that according to the degrees of every mans holiness and vertue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happiness in the other; that *he that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sows plentifully shall reap plentifully*; and that the measure of every man's reward shall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions? And notwithstanding we are allur'd by the most glorious promises and hopes, and aw'd by the greatest fears, and urg'd by the most forcible argument in the World, the evident necessity of the thing; Yet how faintly do we run the Race that is set before us? How frequently and how easily are we stop'd or diverted in our Christian Course by very little Temptations? How cold, and how careless, and how inconstant are we in the Exercises of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty? Did we act reasonably, and as Men use to do in matters of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity does depend.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security, and resolve to make that the great business of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity: And when we are immers'd in the cares and business of this Life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought often come into our minds, That there is *one thing needful*, and which therefore deserves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another sort of Persons, who are grossly careless of this *one thing necessary*, and do not seem to mind it at all: Who go on securely in an evil Course, as if either they had no Souls, or no concernment for them. I may say to these as the Master of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was fast asleep in the Storm, *What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise and call upon thy God*. When our Souls are every moment in danger of sinking, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every Oar, and to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so precious from a danger so threatening and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of this Argument of necessity in other cases, and very carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of this life, and how to avoid those great temporal evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering : But the great necessity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eternity, to secure the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the endless and insupportable miseries of another World. *This, this, is the one thing necessary* ; and to this we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the necessity of things, and wisely weigh the concerns of this Life and the other in a just and equal balance, we should be ashamed to misplace our diligence and industry as we do ; to bestow our best thoughts and time about these vain and perishing things, and to take no care about that *better part which cannot be taken from us*. Fond and vain men that we are ! who are so solicitous how we shall pass a few days in this world, but matter not what shall become of us for ever.

But as careless as we are now about these things, time will come when we shall sadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick : When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God shall be pleas'd to grant us then so much time and use of our Reason as to be able to recollect our selves, we shall then be convinc'd how great a necessity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being sensible of the value of them, till we are ready to despair of saving them.

But, blessed be God, this is not yet our case, though we know not how soon it may be. Let us then be wise, and consider these things in time, lest Death and Despair should overtake and oppress us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to consider that this is the best opportunity of your Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now most capable of the best impressions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin* : This is the acceptable time, this is the day of Salvation.

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so ; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might : For it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, that the best thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible World which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware : Let us but judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them : And let us live now, as after a few days we shall every one of us wish with all our Souls that we had liv'd ; and be as serious, as if we were ready to step into the other World, and to enter upon that change which Death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange stupidity of Men ! That a change so near, so great, so certain, should affect us so coldly, and be so little consider'd and provided for by us : That the things of Time should move us so much, and the things of Eternity so little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it ?

If we be Christians, and do verily believe the things which I am speaking of, and that after a few days more are pass'd Death will come, and draw
aside

aside that thick Veil of Sense and Security which now hides these things from us; and shew us that fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth to think upon: I say, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for Death and a better Life, as may give him that constancy and firmness of Spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great Change without amazement; and to have a mind almost equally poiz'd between that strong inclination of Nature which makes us desirous to live, and that wiser dictate of Reason and Religion which should make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these things, because our eyes are dazzel'd with the false light and splendour of earthly felicity: But *this assuredly is more worth than all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them*, to be able to possess our Souls at such a time, and to be at perfect Peace with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed trusting in God*: To have our Accounts made up, and Estate of our immortal Souls as well settled and secur'd, as by the assistance of God's Grace humane care and endeavour, tho' mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first and great care, and prefer it to all other interests whatsoever. And to this end, we should resolutely disentangle our selves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have competent liberty and leisure to attend this great concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit posture and preparation for another World: That when Sickness and Death shall come, we may not act our last part indecently and confusedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we shall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: Whereby our Souls, when they will stand most in need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and in an anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become of them for ever.

To conclude, This care of Religion and our Souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparison of it we are to neglect the very necessities of Life. So our Lord teacheth us, *Take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The Calls of God and Religion are so very pressing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever: This our Saviour signifieth to us by denying the Disciple, whom he had call'd to follow him, leave to go and bury his Father, *Let the dead, says he, bury their dead, but do thou follow me.*

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the business of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever else we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end:* Which God grant we may all do, *in this our day*; for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever. Amen.

Matth. 6.
31. 33.

SERMON XXXV.

*Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.*Preached before the Queen at WHITEHALL,
March 7. 16⁸⁹₉₀.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

Among all the Arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of Men, which are fetch'd from another World; and from the final state of good and bad men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the latter part of this *Chapter*, he gives us of the *Judgment* of the great Day, namely, that at the end of the World the *Son of Man* shall come in his glory, with his Holy Angels, and shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory; and all Nations shall be gathered before him, and shall be separated into two great Companies, the Righteous and the Wicked; who shall stand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who shall pronounce Sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The Righteous shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and the Wicked shall be sentenc'd to everlasting punishment. And these, that is, the Wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.

The Words are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at first hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, and between endless Happiness and Misery: But although these Words be so very easie to be understood, they can never be too much consider'd by us. The Scope and design of them is, to represent to us the different Fates of good and bad men in another World, and that their Ends there, will be as different, as their Ways and Doings have been here in this World: The serious consideration whereof is the greatest discouragement to Sin, and the most powerful Argument in the World to a holy and vertuous Life: Because it is an Argument taken from our greatest and most lasting interest, our happiness or our misery to all Eternity: A concernment of that vast consequence, that it must be the greatest stupidity and folly in the World for any man to neglect it.

This eternal state of Rewards and Punishments in another World, our Blessed Saviour hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, viz. That good men shall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part should be true, concerning the eternal punishment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Justice of God to punish temporary Crimes with eternal

nal Torments: Because Justice always observes a proportion between Offences and Punishments; but between temporary Sins and eternal Punishments there is no proportion. And as this seems hard to be reconcil'd with Justice, so much more with that excess of Goodness which we suppose to be in God.

And therefore they say, that though God seem to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners shall be everlastingly punish'd, yet these declarations of Scripture are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the essential perfections of the Divine Nature.

This is the full force and strength of the Objection. And my work at this time shall be to clear, if I can, this difficult Point. And that for these two Reasons. *First*, For the vindication of the Divine Justice and Goodness: *That God may be justified in his sayings, and appear Righteous when he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, because the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmost extent is of so great a moment to a good Life, and so great a discouragement to Sin: For the sting of Sin is the terrour of eternal punishment; and if men were once set free from the fear and belief of this, the most powerful restraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in Answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour to prove these two things.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

Secondly, That this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God.

First, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following *Texts*, Matth. 18. 8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* And Matth. 25. 41. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And here in the *Text*, these, that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.* And Mark 9. it is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our Saviour, *where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And 2 Thess. 1. 9. speaking of *them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of his Son*, it is said of them, *who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*

I know very well that great endeavour hath been us'd to avoid the force of these *Texts*, by shewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited sense, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signifie for a long time and till the end of the *Jewish Dispensation*. And in the *Epistle of St. Jude, verse 7th.* The Cities of *Sodom and Gomorrah* are said to be *set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is, of a fire that was not extinguish'd till those Cities were utterly consum'd.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signifie an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently proved by the instances alledg'd to this purpose. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger sense and so as necessarily to signifie an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness in another World is promised to good men, and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord*. Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both, because if God had intended to have told us that the punishment

ishment of wicked men shall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than those that are used in this case, whereby to express to us a duration without end : And likewise, which is almost a peremptory decision of the thing, because the duration of the punishment of wicked men is in the very same sentence expressed by the very same word which is us'd for the duration of the happiness of the righteous : As is evident from the Text, *These*, speaking of the wicked, *shall go away, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, into eternal punishment, but the righteous, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, into life eternal.* I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd ; namely, to shew that this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be answered several ways, none of which seems to me to give clear and full satisfaction to it.

First, It is said by some, that because sin is infinite in respect of the Object against whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deserves an infinite punishment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of subtlety than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Person against whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reason all offences against God are certainly the greatest of all other. But that Crimes should hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted ; and that for this plain reason ; because then the evil and demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal ; for the demerit of no sin can be more than infinite : And if the demerit of all sins be equal, there can then be no reason for the degrees of punishment in another World : But to deny that there are degrees of punishment there, is not only contrary to reason, but to our Saviour's express assertion, that some shall be *beaten with many stripes* and some with fewer, and that it shall be *more tolerable for some in the day of judgment* than for others. Besides, that by the same reason that the least sin that is committed against God may be said to be infinite because of its object, the least punishment that is inflicted by God may be said to be infinite because of its Author ; and then all punishments from God as well as all sins against him would be equal ; which is palpably absurd. So that this answer is by no means sufficient to break the force of this Objection.

Secondly, It is said by others, that if wicked men lived for ever in this World they would sin for ever, and therefore they deserve to be punish'd for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reason enough in it to give satisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never so long he would never repent and grow better ?

Besides, that the Justice of God doth only punish the sins which men have committed in this life, and not those which they might possibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, It is said in the last place, that God hath set before men everlasting Happiness and Misery, and the sinner hath his choice. Here are two things said which seem to bid fairly towards an answer.

First, That the reward which God promiseth to our obedience is equal to the punishment which he threatens to our disobedience, but yet this I doubt will not reach the business : Because though it be not contrary to Justice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour ; yet it may be so, to exceed in punishments.

Secondly, It is further said, that the sinner in this case hath nothing to complain of, since he hath his own choice. This I confess is enough to silence the sinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his destruction is of himself

himself; but yet after all that, it does not seem so clearly to satisfy the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by these following Considerations.

First, Let it be consider'd, that the measure of Penalties with respect to Crimes is not only, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of Government; which requires such penalties as may, if it be possible, secure the observation of the Law, and deter men from the breach of it. And the reason of this is evident, because if it were once declar'd that no man should suffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the consequence of this would be that sinners would be better husbands of their time and sin so much the faster, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might satisfy for their sins by a shorter punishment.

And it would be unreasonable likewise upon another account; because some of the greatest sins may perhaps be committed in the shortest time; for instance, *Murder*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of Murder may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being punish'd with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force.

Besides, that whoever considers how ineffectual the threatening even of eternal torments is to the greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfy'd that a less penalty than that of eternal sufferings would to the far greatest part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishments; but from one great end and design of Government, which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver; then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal Sufferings, Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater Sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented*; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The case then in short stands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lye at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what punishment upon us he pleaseth: And consequently, to secure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deter men from the Transgression of it. And this is not
esteemed

esteemed unjust among men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: But in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Niniveh*, and his peevish Prophet did understand the threatening to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the threatening he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was so touch'd in honour that he had rather have died himself than that *Niniveh* should not have been destroy'd, only to have verifi'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath confirm'd these threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain sign of the immutability of his counsel; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impenitent Sinners under the Gospel; and consequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*, when he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally oblige Him to execute his threatening upon all impenitent Sinners under the Gospel, that they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God. And this is very truly reason'd, so far as the threatening extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be stretch'd, doth not seem to reach any further than to the exclusion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven and their falling finally short of the Rest and Happiness of the Righteous: Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion ascrib'd to *Origen* that the Devils and wicked men shall all be saved at last; God having sworn in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest.

But then, as to the eternal misery and punishment threatned to wicked men in the other World, though it be not necessarily comprehended in this Oath that they shall not enter into his Rest: yet we are to consider, that both the tenour of the Sentence which our blessed Saviour hath assur'd us will be pass'd upon them at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*; and likewise this Declaration in the Text, that *the Wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment*, though they do not restrain God from doing what he pleases, yet they cut off from the Sinner all reasonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For since the great Judge of the World hath made so plain and express a Declaration, and will certainly pass such a Sentence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in the world for

for the Sinner to entertain any hope of escaping it, and to venture his Soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon this Argument, that seems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *destruction* and *perishing*, whereby the punishment of wicked Men in the other World is most frequently express'd in *Scripture*, do most properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reasonably be so understood in the matter of which we are now speaking.

To this I answer, that these words, and those which answer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, used to signify a state of great misery and suffering, without the utter extinction of the miserable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* said to bring *destruction* upon a Nation when he sends great Judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in most Languages, than by *perishing* to express a person's being undone and made very miserable. As in that known passage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the *Roman Senate*, * *Let all the Gods and Goddesses*, saith he, *destroy me worse than at this very time I feel my self to perish*, &c. in which Saying, the words, *destroy* and *perish*, are both of them us'd to express the miserable anguish and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

* Ita me Dii
Deaq. omnes
pejus perdant
quam hodie
perire me sen-
tiro, &c.

And as for the word *Death*; a state of misery which is as bad or worse than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: And for this reason the punishment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the *Revelation* so frequently and fitly call'd *the second death*. And *the Lake of fire*, into which the wicked *shall be cast* to be tormented in it, is expressly call'd *the second death*.

Rev. 20. 14.

But besides this, they that argue from the force of these words, that the punishment of wicked men in the other World shall be nothing else but an utter end of their Being, do necessarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

First, That hereby they exclude all positive punishment and torment of Sinners. For if *the second death*, and to be *destroy'd*, and to *perish*, signify nothing else but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful Sentence which shall be pass'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture*, which doth so often describe the punishment of wicked men in Hell by positive torments: And particularly our Blessed Saviour, describing the lamentable state of the damned in Hell, expressly says, that *there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; which cannot be, if *Annihilation* be all the meaning and effect of the Sentence of the Great Day.

Secondly, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the punishment of Sinners in the other World, then the punishment of all Sinners must of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this also is most directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already shewn.

I know very well that some who are of this opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they must not argue this from the force of the Words before mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that *Annihilation* is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next Life; And if that be not

not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in *Scripture* they can find the least ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked Men shall at last end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot see what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

Thirdly, We may consider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punish'd, but that they may not sin, and so may escape the punishment threaten'd. And therefore the higher the threatening runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it; because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

Fourthly, Let it be consider'd likewise, that when it is so very plain that God hath threatned eternal misery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earnest, and will execute these threatnings upon them, if they will obstinately stand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reason we ought so to demean our selves, and so to perswade others, as knowing the terror of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and last place, That if we suppose that God did intend that his threatnings should have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the same Revelation which declares these Threatnings, any intimation should be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his threatnings: Because a Threatning hath quite lost its force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And consequently it would be a very impious design to go about to teach or perswade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that misery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not so, as sawcily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and express threatening of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we still go on to *treasure up to our selves wrath against the day of wrath*, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very solicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that he, *who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that he will certainly so manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, as *to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged*. For notwithstanding his Threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may rest assur'd that he will *judge the world in righteousness*; and if it be any wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which he knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable for

for ever, that He will not do it ; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Punishment which he could not justly execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it : And always to remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's Threatnings ; and that nothing will more justify the infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish Presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling* ; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly severe, that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This God heartily desires we would do ; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*. So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this misery upon us. And both these, I am sure, are Arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more than to warn us of this misery, and earnestly to persuade us to prevent it ; and to threaten us so very terribly, on purpose to deter us from so great a danger ?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we will go still on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long suffering, and forbearance* ; what in reason remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to consume us* ? And what almost can Justice, or even Goodness it self do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon ; and which no warning, no persuasion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid ? And when, as the *Apostle* says, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death* ; yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us Life and Death, eternal Happiness and Misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune : And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this Misery, *Wo unto us ! for we have rewarded evil to our selves*.

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Punishment the just God hath threatned to the Workers of Iniquity : and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. *These, that is, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal*.

Here are *Life and Death, Happiness and Misery* set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life ; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences of it : But an eternal Life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleasant and happy ; and a perpetual Death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

These God propounds to our choice : And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our sins, and to reform our lives, what will ? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the understanding of Man, than *everlasting Punishment, and Life eternal* ; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now,

Now, considering in what terms the Threatnings of the Gospel are express'd, we have all the reason in the World to believe that the Punishment of Sinners in another World will be everlasting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find it by experience how it is: And if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being discharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty consolation, that they shall be miserable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment of things? No consideration and care of themselves, no concernment for their own lasting Interest and Happiness?

Origen, I know not for what good reason, is said to have been of opinion, That the punishment of Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thousand years; and that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly persuade my self, that so wise and learned a man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise term of a thousand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thousand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatened in the Gospel: I say, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiser to take care to avoid it, than to dispute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, especially if we put it at the worst, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all possible means to be provided against: So terrible, so intolerable is the thought, yea the very least suspicion of being miserable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask you, as *St. Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may answer for you my self as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them these things are clearly revealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a solemn profession every day.

And yet when we consider how most men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour* and our *Judge*, That *the wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our Actions, we must either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we must change our Lives.

Let us then consider, and shew our selves men. And if we do so, can any man to please himself for a little while be contented to be punished for ever; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next World?

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of

Sin and Vice: Because they bid us so infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short Pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the Scales against any Pleasure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly; when we know the terrors of the Lord, and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loss of our immortal Souls, and by suffering the vengeance of eternal Fire?

What is it then that can give men the Heart and Courage; but I recal that Word, because it is not true Courage, but fool hardiness, thus to outbrave the Judgment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable Eternity? How is it possible that men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet hour, whilst so great a danger hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and just sense of this danger, we cannot fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to escape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be Happy or Miserable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate and measure things as they appear now to our sensual and deluded and deprav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the last issue and consequence of them: Let us often think of these things, and consider well with our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill and possess our minds, when we shall stand trembling before our Judge, in a fearful expectation of that terrible Sentence which is just ready to be pronounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounced to be executed upon us: When we shall have a full and clear sight of the unspeakable Happiness, and of the horrible and astonishing Miseries of another World: When there shall be no longer any Veil of Flesh and Sense to interpose between them and us, and to hide these things from our eyes: And, in a word, when Heaven with all the Glories of it, shall be open to our view; and, as the expression is in Job, Hell shall be naked before us, and Destruction shall have no covering.

How shall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of those things which we will not now be perswaded to believe? And how shall we then wish, that we had believed the terrors of the Lord; and instead of quarrelling with the Principles of Religion, and calling them into question, we had lived under the constant sense and awe of them?

Blessed be God, that there is yet hope concerning us, and that we may yet flee from the wrath to come; and that the Miseries of Eternity may yet be prevented in Time: And that for this very end and purpose, our most Gracious and Merciful God hath so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a desire to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

I will conclude all with the Counsel of the Wise Man; Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your selves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the Living: But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themselves. Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in Jesus Christ: To whom, with Thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N

SERMON XXXVI.

*Success not always answerable to the probability of
Second Causes.*

BEING
A FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

House of Commons,

ON

Wednesday, April the 16th. 1690.

ECCLESIASTES IX. II.

*I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to
the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread
to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor
yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance hap-
peneth to them all.*



Ext to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more essential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence, and a constant dependance upon him, as the great Governour of the World, and the wise Disposer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the Children of Men; And nothing can be a greater Argument of Providence, than that there is such an order of Causes laid in Nature, that in ordinary course every thing does usually attain its end; and yet that there is such a mixture of Contingency, as that now and then, we cannot tell how nor why, the most likely causes do deceive us, and fail of producing their usual effects.

For if there be a God and a Providence, it is reasonable that things should be thus: Because a Providence does suppose all things to have been at first wisely fram'd, and with a fitness to attain their end; but yet it does also suppose that God hath reserv'd to himself a power and liberty to interpose and to cross as he pleases, the usual course of things; to awaken men to the consideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to ascribe those things to his wise disposal, which, if we never saw any change,

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we should be apt to impute to blind necessity. And therefore the *Wise-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had observed things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Causes, yet sometimes they fall out quite otherwise, *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

The connexion of which Words, with the foregoing Discourse, is briefly this. Among many other Observations which the *Wise Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the mistakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verse* before it, of two Extremes of humane Life: Some, because of the uncertainty of all worldly things, cast off all care and diligence, and neglect the use of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are disappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely so much upon their own skill and industry, as to promise success to themselves in all their undertakings; and presume so much upon second Causes, as if no consideration at all were to be had of the First.

The *Wise Preacher* reproves both these extremes, and shews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of those who sit still, and will use no care and endeavour, because it may all happen to be disappointed, and to fail of Success: Not considering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the business, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary course of things; and that in the order of Second Causes, these are the most likely and effectual means to any end: And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counsels men, whatever they propose to themselves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the use of proper means for the attainment of it; in the *Verse* immediately before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he observes also, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they who manage their affairs with great wisdom and industry, are apt to presume and reckon upon the certain success of them, without taking into consideration that which in all human affairs is most considerable, the favour and blessing of that Almighty and Wise Providence which rules the World; *I returned, says he, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

I returned and saw, that is, having consider'd on the one hand the folly of sloth and carelessness, I turned mine eyes the other way, and saw as great an error on the other hand; in mens presuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence of God. For I have found, says *Solomon*, by manifold observation, That the success of things does not always answer the probability of second causes and means. So that the sum of the *Preacher's* advice is this: When thou propoudest any end to thy self, be diligent and vigorous in the use of means; and when thou hast done all, look above and beyond these to a Superiour Cause which over-rules, and steers, and stops as he pleases, all the motions and activity of second Causes: And be not confident that all things are ever so wisely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of success. For the Providence of God doth many times step in to divert the most probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: And whenever he pleaseth to do so, the most strong and likely means do fall lame, or stumble, or by some accident or other come short of their end.

I returned,

I returned, and saw under the Sun, that is, here below, in this inferiour World.

That the race is not to the swift : This the *Chaldee Paraphrast* does understand with relation to warlike Affairs, *I beheld, says he, and saw, that they who are swift as eagles do not always escape in the day of battle.* But I chuse rather to understand the Words in their more obvious sense, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is swiftest from winning it.

Nor the battle to the strong ; That is, Victory and Success in War do not always attend the greatest force and preparations, nor doth that side which in human estimation is strongest always prevail and get the better.

Nor yet bread to the wise ; *Neque doctorum panem esse*, so some render the Words, that learned men are not always secured against Poverty and Want.

Nor yet riches to men of understanding, for so some *Interpreters* translate the Words, *Neque industriis divitias esse*, that those who take most pains do not always get the greatest Estates.

Nor yet favour to men of skill ; that is, to those who understand men and business, and how to apply themselves dextrously to the inclinations and interests of Princes and Great men. Others interpret these Words more generally, *Neque peritorum artificum esse gratiam*, that those who excel most in their several Arts and Professions do not always meet with suitable encouragement : But because the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is so frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former sense seems to be more easie and natural.

But time and chance happeneth to them all ; that is, saith *Aben Ezra*, there is a secret Providence of God which sometimes presents men with unexpected opportunities, and interposeth accidents which no human wisdom could foresee : Which gives success to very unlikely means ; and defeats the swift, and the strong, and the learned, and the industrious, and them that are best vers'd in men and business, of their several ends and designs.

It sometimes happens, that he that is *swiftest*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by some other unlucky accident may lose the Race.

It sometimes falls out, that a much smaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a pass ; by a stratagem, or by a sudden surprize, or by some other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in comparison, by favour, or friends, or by some happy chance of setting out to the best advantage the little learning he has, before one that hath less, may arrive at great things ; when perhaps at the same time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to starve.

And that men of no great parts and industry may stumble into an estate and by some casual hit in Trade, may attain such a Fortune, as the man that hath toil'd and drudg'd all his life shall never be able to reach.

And *Lastly*, that a man of no great ambition or design may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, some soft and lucky season of address, may slide into his Prince's favour, and all on the sudden be hoisted up to that degree of dignity and esteem, as the designing Man who hath been laying Trains to blow up his Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out, and to skrew himself in, shall never be able to attain.

The words thus explain'd contain this general Proposition, which shall be the subject of my following Discourse.

That

That in humane affairs the most likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event constantly answer the probability of second causes ; but there is a secret Providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most hopeful and probable designs.

In the handling of this Proposition I shall do these three things.

First, I shall confirm and illustrate the truth of it, by an Induction of the Particulars which are instanc'd in, here in the *Text*.

Secondly, I shall give some reason and account of this, why the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs.

Thirdly, I shall draw some Inferences from the whole, suitable to the occasion of this Day. In all which I shall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

First, For the confirmation and illustration of this Proposition, *That the most likely means do not always attain their end ; but there is a secret Providence which over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most probable and hopeful designs.* This is the general Conclusion which *Solomon* proves by this Induction of Particulars in the *Text*. And he instanceth in the most probable means for the compassing of the several ends which most men in this World propose to themselves. And the great darlings of mankind are *Victory, Riches, and Honour* : I do not mention *Pleasure*, because that seems rather to result from the use and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man design *Victory*, what more probable means to overcome in a Race that swiftness ? What more likely to prevail in War than strength ? If a man aim at *Riches*, what more proper to raise an Estate than understanding and industry ? If a man aspire to *Honour*, what more likely to prefer him to the King's favour and service than dexterity and skill in business ? And yet experience shews that these means, as probable as they seem to be, are not always successful for the accomplishment of their several ends.

Or else we may suppose that *Solomon* by these Instances did intend to represent the chief engines and instruments of humane designs and actions. Now there are *five* things more especially, which do eminently qualify a man for any undertaking ; expedition and quickness of dispatch ; strength and force, providence and forecast ; diligence and industry ; knowledge, and insight into men and business : And some think that *Solomon* did intend to represent these several qualities by the several instances in the *Text*. *The Race is not to the swift*, that is, men of the greatest expedition and dispatch do not always succeed : For we see that men do sometimes out-run business, and make haste to be undone. *Nor the battle to the strong*, that is, neither does force and strength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wise* ; which some understand of the provident care and pains of the Husbandmen, whose harvest is not always answerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet riches to men of understanding*, or industry ; that is, neither is diligence in business always crown'd with success. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither have they that have the greatest dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to rise. And if we take the words in this sense, the thing will come much to one : But I rather approve the first interpretation, as being less forc'd and nearer to the *Letter*.

So that the force of *Solomon's* reasoning is this, if the swiftest do not always win the race ; nor the strongest always overcome in War : If knowledge and learning do not always secure men from want ; nor industry always make men rich ; nor political skill always raise men to high place ; nor any other means, that can be instanced in as most probable, do constantly and infal-

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libly succeed : then it must be acknowledg'd that there is some other Cause which mingles it self with humane affairs and governs all events ; and which can, and does when it pleases, defeat the most likely, and bring to pass the most improbable designs : And what else can that be imagin'd to be, but the secret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God ? when we can find no other, we are very unreasonable if we will not admit this to be the Cause of such extraordinary events, but will obstinately impute that to blind Necessity or Chance which hath such plain Characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wisdom.

I might be large upon every one of these Instances in the *Text*, and illustrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Histories. But I shall briefly pass over all of them, but the *second*, *The battle is not to the strong.*

The race is not to the swift. If we understand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may snatch Victory from the swiftest runner. If we understand it, as the *Chaldee Paraphrase* does, with relation to War, that the swiftest does not always overcome or escape in the day of Battel ; of this *Asahel* is an eminent Instance who though he was, as the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not escape the Spear of *Abner*. It seems that among the *Ancients*, swiftness was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warriour, both because it serves for a sudden assault and onset, and likewise for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore *David*, in his Poetical *Lamentation* over those two great Captains, *Saul* and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs ; *They were*, says he, *swifter than Eagles, stronger than Lyons* : And the constant Character which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his principal *Heroes*, is, that *he was swift of foot* : The Poet feigns of him, that by some charm or gift of the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his Body except his heel : And *that* was the part to which he trusted ; and in *that* he received his mortal wound : The wise Poet hereby instructing us, that many times our greatest danger lyes there, where we place our chief confidence and safety.

Nor yet bread to the wise, or to the learned. The poverty of Poets is Proverbial ; and there are frequent instances in History of eminently learned persons that have been reduced to great straits and necessities.

Nor yet riches to men of understanding : By which, whether we understand men of great parts, or of great diligence and industry ; it is obvious to every man's observation, that an ordinary capacity and understanding does usually lye more level to the business of a common Trade and Profession, than more refin'd and elevated parts ; which lye rather for speculation than practice, and are better fitted for the pleasure and ornament of conversation, than for the toil and drudgery of business : As a fine Razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull Hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of Timber. And even when Parts and Industry meet together, they are many times less successful in the raising of a great Estate, than men of much lower and slower understandings : because these are apt to admire riches, which is a great spur to industry ; and because they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one business, from which their thoughts never straggle into vain and useless enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs ; all which being foreign to their business they leave to those who are, as they are wont to say of them in scorn, more curious, and too wise to be rich.

Nor

Nor yet favour to men of skill. All History is full of Instances of the casual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others, who have made it their serious study and business, have fallen short of it. I could give a famous Example in this kind, of the manifold and manifest disappointment of a whole Order of men: the swiftest and most subtle, in their generation, of all the children of this World; the most politically instituted, and the best studied and skill'd in the tempers and interests of men; the most pragmatical, and cunning to insinuate themselves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Families: and who, by long experience, and an universal intelligence, and communicated observations, have reduced humane affairs, at least as they think, to a certain Art and Method, and to the most steady Rules that such contingent things are capable of: I believe you all guess before-hand whom I mean, even the *honest Jesuits*: And yet these men of so much Art and Skill have met with as many checks and disappointments, as any sort of men ever did: They have been discountenanc'd by almost all Princes and States, and, one time or other, banish'd out of most of the Courts and Countries of Europe. And it is no small argument of the Divine Providence, that so much cunning hath met with so little countenance and success; and hath been so often, so grossly infatuated, and their *counsels turn'd into foolishness*.

But I promis'd only to mention these, and to insist upon the second Instance in the Text, *I return'd, and saw under the sun, that the battle is not to the strong*, to the *Gibborim*, the *Gyants*, for so the Hebrew word signifies; in which *Solomon* might possibly have respect to the History of the *Israelites* subduing the *Canaanites*, a People of great strength and stature, among whom were the *Gyants*, the *sons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliath*: But however that be, the Scripture is full of Examples to this purpose; that when the Providence of God is pleas'd to interpose in favour of any side, it becomes victorious; according to the saying of King *Asa* in his Prayer to God, *it is nothing with thee to help*
 2 Chron. 14.
 11. *whether with many, or with those that have no power.*

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles: Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his Host in the Red Sea; and the *Stars* fighting in their courses against *Sisera*; by which Poetical expression I suppose is meant *Sisera's* being remarkably defeated by a visible hand from Heaven: And such was the destruction of the proud King of *Assyria's* Army by an *Angel*, who slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more humane ways; by striking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and sometimes by putting extraordinary spirits and courage into the weaker side, so that *an hundred shall chase a thousand, and a thousand shall put ten thousand to flight*.

This made *David* so frequently to acknowledge the Providence of God, especially in the Affairs of War. *There is no King saved by the multitude of an Host, neither is a mighty man delivered by much strength.* And again, *I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* And *Solomon* confirms the same observation, *There is no wisdom, says he, nor understanding, nor counsel*
 Psal. 33. 16.
 Psal. 44. 6.
 Prov. 21. 30, *against the Lord. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety,*
 31. *or, as some Translations render it, Victory, is of the Lord.* *Gideon*, by a very odd stratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers*, defeated a very numerous Army, only with three hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer*, by climbing up a Rock, and coming suddenly on the back of the *Philistines* Camp, struck them with such a terror as put their whole Army to flight. King *Asa*, with a much inferiour number, defeated that huge *Ethiopian* Army which consisted of

of a *Million*. And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army overthrown, almost by a handful of *Grecians*? And to come nearer our selves, how was that formidable Fleet of the *Spaniards*, which they presumptuously called *invincible*, shatter'd and broken in pieces, chiefly by the Winds and the Sea? So many accidents are there, especially in War, whereby the Divine Providence doth sometimes interpose and give Victory to the weaker side.

And this hath been so apparent in all Ages, that even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the Affairs of War, a special interposition of *Fortune*, by which the wiser among them did understand the *Divine Providence*. *Plutarch*, speaking of the *Romans*, says, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very same with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the Text, did lay the foundation of their *Greatness*, by which he ascribes the success to a remarkable Providence of God concurring with several happy Opportunities.

And *Livy*, their great Historian, hath this remarkable observation, That in all humane affairs, especially in matters of War, *Fortune* hath a mighty stroke. And again, *No where*, says he, is the event less answerable to expectation than in War; and therefore nothing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not turn the Scales in a great matter. And *Cæsar* himself, who was perhaps the most skilful and prosperous Warriour that ever was, makes the same acknowledgment; As in all other things, says he, so particularly in War, *Fortune* hath a huge sway. And *Plutarch* observes, That there was no Temple at Rome dedicated to *Wisdom* or *Valour*, but a most magnificent and stately one to *Fortune*; signifying hereby, that they did ascribe their Success infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now in the

Second place, to give some reason and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth sometimes thus interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his Providence, and of their dependance upon Him, and subordination to Him; and that He is the great Governour of the World, and rules in the Kingdoms of men; and that all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to Him, and the power of Second Causes inconsiderable: That He doth according to his will, in the Armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou.

II.

God hath so order'd things, in the Administration of the Affairs of the World, as to encourage the use of means; and yet so, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and success of them: To encourage Industry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural course, and to fall out according to the power and probability of second Causes.

But then, lest men should cast off Religion, and deny the God that is above, lest they should trust in their sword and their bow, and say, the Lord hath not done this; lest men should look upon themselves as the Creators and Framers of their own Fortune, and when they do but a little outstrip others in wisdom or power, in the skill and conduct of humane affairs, they should grow proud and presumptuous, God is pleased sometimes more remarkably to interpose, to hide pride from man, as the expression is in *Job*; to check the haughtiness and insolence of mens spirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modesty and humility; to make us to know that we are but men, and that the reins of the World are not in our hands, but that there is One above who sways and governs all things here below.

And indeed if we should suppose, in the first frame of things which we call Nature,

Nature, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a constant course, according to the power and force of second Causes, without any interposition of Providence to stop, or alter that course, upon any occasion: In this case, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but especially of Prayer to God would be quite taken away: Upon this Supposition, it would be the vainest thing in the World to pray to God for the good Success of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a settled and establish'd course; then instead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the best provision and preparation we can for the effecting of what we desire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counsel and consideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently suppose, that the Providence of God does frequently interpose, to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in humane probability they seem'd to tend.

So that it is every whit as necessary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that He governs the World, and does when he pleases interpose in the affairs of it, as that He made it at first. I come now in the

III.

Third and last place, to make some Inferences suitable to the Occasion of this Day, from what hath been said upon this Argument: And they shall be these.

First, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time spent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to Him for his Blessing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our Affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is still in God's hand, and rests upon the disposal of his Providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themselves so carelessly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we see too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is spent in Devotion as lost from their business.

If men would but take a view of what hath happen'd to them in the course of a long Life, I believe most of us would see reason to acknowledge, that our Prosperity and Success in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undesign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecast and conduct.

And if this were well consider'd by us, we should not methinks be so apt to leave God out of our counsels and undertakings, as if he were a mere Name and Cypher in the World. It is, I am sure, the advice of one that was much wiser and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean, *Solomon*, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths: Be not wise in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.* There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this. That to live under a constant sense and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to seek his favour and blessing upon all our designs being fearful to offend Him, and careful to please him, is a much nearer and surer way to Success, than our own best Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore, at such a time, more especially, when we are going to War or engaged in it, we should break off our sins by repentance and the sincere resolution of a better course: We should earnestly implore the blessing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our Cause be

just, but likewise that there be *no wicked thing* amongst us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accursed thing*, that may provoke Him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to the Jews, *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemy, then keep thy self from every wicked thing; then*, that is, more especially at such a time. Deut. 23. 9.

And this is a necessary Caution, not only to those who are personally engaged in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the Day of Battle, or if God shall suffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with Him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cause, but of a good Conscience, void of offence towards God and Men.

But this Caution likewise concerns those, who are interested in the success and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Estates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Consciences; which are now every whit as much at stake, as our Civil Interests and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of these, we should be very careful *to keep our selves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us, may not for our sins, and for our sakes, turn their backs in the day of Battle, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

Secondly, From hence we may likewise learn, so to use the means as still to depend upon God; who can, as he pleases, bless the Counsels and Endeavours of Men, or blast them and make them of none effect. For as God hath promised nothing but to a wise and diligent use of means, so all our prudence, and industry, and most careful preparations may miscarry, if He do not favour our design: For without Him nothing is wise, nothing is strong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end.

We should indeed use the means as vigorously, as if God did nothing; and when we have done so, we should depend upon God for the success of those means, as if we our selves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and blessing: For when all is done, we are only safe under his Protection, and sure of success from his Blessing.

For whatever vain and *foolish* men may say in their hearts, *There is, There is a God*, that made the World, and Administers the affairs of it with great Wisdom and Goodness; else how came any of us into Being, or what do we here? Did we not most assuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and super-intends humane affairs; the first wish of a Wise man would be, to steal out of Being, if he could; and that the same Chance or Necessity that brought him into the World, would take the first opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to present, and great, and certain Evils; and to have no security against the continuance of them, or the return of the same or worse Evils; nor to have any assurance of a better and more durable state of rest and happiness hereafter, is in truth so very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any consideration in the World that is of force and power enough to support the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiser, and better, and more powerful than our selves, and that keeps things from running into endless confusion and disorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly consider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we suffer upon his account, I do not see what reason any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wish the continuance of it for one moment.

Thirdly and lastly, The consideration of what hath been said upon this Argument, should keep us from being too sanguine and confident of the

most likely designs and undertakings; because these do not always answer the probability of second Causes and Means; and never less, than when we do with the greatest confidence rely upon them; when we promise most to our selves from them, then are they most likely to deceive us: They are as the Prophet compares them, like a *broken reed*, which a man may walk with in his hand, whilst he lays no great stress upon it; but if he trust to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even pierce him through.

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the most hopeful and likely condition to succeed and do well, than to shut God and his Providence out of our counsels and consideration. When we pass God by, and take no notice of Him, but will rely upon our own wisdom and strength, we provoke him to leave us *in the hands of our own counsel*, and to let us see what weak and foolish Creatures we are: And a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he clasps his Arms closest about himself: Besides, that God loves to resist the self-confident and presumptuous, and to scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

And as in all our concerns we ought to have a great regard to God, the Supreme disposer of all things, and earnestly to seek his favour and blessing upon all our undertakings, so more especially in the Affairs of War; in which the providence of God is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to interpose and interest it self: And there is great reason to think he does so; because all War is, as it were, an Appeal to God, and a reference of those Causes to the decision of his Providence, which through the Pride, and Injustice, and perverse passions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to shew himself, and in an eminent manner to take part with Right and Justice against those *mighty Oppressors of the Earth*, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this case, the Providence of God is sometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to One that vainly gives out himself *not unequal to the whole World*; by very weak and contemptible means; and, as the Apostle elegantly expresseth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are*: And to say to Him, as God once did to the proud King of Assyria: *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy one of Israel. Hast thou not heard long ago, that I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced Cities into ruinous heaps: Therefore their Inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded, &c.* But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me: Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook into thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.—The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this.

Isa. 37. 23,
26, 27, 28,
29, 32.

But more especially, in vindication of his oppressed Truth and Religion and in the great and signal Deliverances of his Church and People, God is wont to take the conduct of Affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by humane rules and measures: He then bids second Causes to stand by, that *his own Arm may be seen, and his Salvation may appear*: He raiseth the spirits of men above their natural pitch, and giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength, as the Prophet expresseth it.

Thus hath the Providence of God very visibly appear'd in our late Deliverance;

rance; in such a manner, as I know not whether He ever did for any other Nation, except the People of *Israel*, when he deliver'd them *from the House of Bondage by so mighty a hand and so out-stretched an arm*: And yet too many among us, I speak it this day to our shame, do not seem to have the least sense of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was so visible in it; but like the Children of *Israel* when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are full of *murmurings* and discontent against God the Author, and his Servant the happy Instrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the Prophet says of *that People*, may I fear be too justly apply'd to us, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness; in the Land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord: Lord, When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed*: And I hope I may add that which follows in the next verse, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works for us*. What God hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earnest that He will carry it on to a perfect Peace and Settlement; and this, notwithstanding our high Provocations and horrible Ingratitude to *the God of our Life, and of our Salvation*.

Isa. 25. 10, 11.

And whenever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpose in humane Affairs, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*: For which reason *their Majesties*, in their great Piety and Wisdom, and from a just sense of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the Kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to set apart this *Day* for solemn Repentance and Humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, and which are of all other our greatest and most dangerous Enemies, may not *separate between God and us*, and hinder good things from us, and cover us with confusion in the day of our danger and distress: And likewise, earnestly to implore the favour and blessing of Almighty God upon *their Majesties* Forces and Preparations by Sea and Land: And more particularly, for the preservation of *his Majesties* Sacred Person, upon whom so much depends, and who is contented again to hazard Himself to save us.

To conclude; There is no such way to engage the Providence of God for us, as by a real Repentance and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our several Places from the highest to the lowest, by the provision of wise and effectual Laws for the discountenancing and suppressing of Profaneness and Vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good Example, to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nation: For without this, whatever we may think of the firmness of our present Settlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with Almighty God, upon whose favour depends the prosperity and stability of the future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to stir up your Charity towards the Poor; which is likewise a great part of the Duty of this Day, and which ought always to accompany our Prayers and Fastings: *Thy Prayers and thine Alms*, saith the Angel to *Cornelius*, are *come up before God*: And therefore if we desire that our Prayers should reach Heaven, and receive a gracious answer from God, we must send up our Alms along with them.

And instead of all other Arguments to this purpose, I shall only recite to you the plain and perswasive words of God Himself, in which He declares what kind of Fast is acceptable to Him: *Is it such a Fast as I have chosen? a Day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable Day*

Isa. 58. 5, 6, &c.

Day to the Lord? Is not this the Fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke: Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thine house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily; thy righteousness, or thine Alms, shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward: Then shalt thou call, and I will answer thee; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am.

Now to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: To God, even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth: Unto Him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father: To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever, Amen.

And the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

A
FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

Lord Mayor, &c.

ON

Wednesday, June the 18th. 1690.

To the Right Honourable

Sir *T H O M A S P I L K I N G T O N*,

Lord Mayor of the City of *London* :

A N D T H E

C O U R T of A L D E R M E N.

M Y L O R D,

IN Obedience to your Commands, I have publish'd
this Sermon lately preach'd before you, and do now
humbly present you with it ; heartily wishing it may have
that good effect for the Reformation of our Lives, and Re-
conciliation of our unhappy Differences, which was sincerely
intended by,

M Y L O R D,

Your most Faithful

and Humble Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XXXVII.

The way to prevent the Ruin of a Sinful People.

JEREMIAH VI. 8.

Be thou instructed O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Hese Words are a merciful warning from God to the People of *Israel* by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, the last Prophet that God sent to them before their Captivity in *Babylon*.

The time of his Prophecy was of a long continuance, above the space of forty years, viz. from the thirteenth year of King *Josiah*, to the eleventh year of King *Zedekiah*, the year in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*.

This I observe, to shew the great patience of God to a sinful Nation. And this is much the same space of time that God gave warning by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles to the same People of the *Jews* concerning their final Destruction. For it was about forty years after the Prediction of our Saviour concerning it, just before his Death, that the terrible Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Jewish* Nation was executed upon them by the *Romans*, or rather chiefly by themselves, as I shall presently shew. Of which dreadful Desolation, the first taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and their Captivity into *Babylon* was a kind of Type and Forerunner. For, as *Josephus* observes, the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus Vespasian* did happen in the very same Month, and on the very same Day of the Month in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, viz. upon our tenth of *August*.

And it is not unworthy of our Observation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold some sort of proportion with the extent of his Judgments. Before the universal Deluge which destroyed the whole World, *Noah* and his Family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of *Noah*, for the space of an hundred and twenty years. Before the destruction of a particular Nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the *Jews*, his time of warning is forty years. And before the destruction of a particular City, if we may conclude any thing from the single example of *Niniveh*, the time of God's warning is yet much shorter, the space of forty days.

And now to what end doth God exercise so much patience and threaten so long before-hand, but that by the terrour of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his Prophet threatens ruin and destruction to the People of *Israel*, he earnestly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might escape the ruin that was denounced against them: This being a condition perpetually implied in the denunciation of publick Judgments, that if a People repent of the evil of their doings, God also will repent of the evil which he said he would do unto them, as he expressly

preſſly declares, chap. 18. verſ. 7, 8. *At what inſtant I ſpeak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to deſtroy it, if that Nation againſt whom I have pronounc'd turn'd from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And here in the Text, after God had threaten'd deſtruction to *Jeruſalem*, becauſe of the overflowing of all manner of wickedneſs and oppreſſion in the miſt of her, he gives her a merciful warning to prevent this ruin and deſolation by repentance, ver. 6, 7. *Thus hath the Lord of Hoſts ſaid, Hew ye down trees, and caſt a mount againſt Jeruſalem; this is a City to be viſited, ſhe is wholly oppreſſion in the miſt of her. As a fountain caſteth out waters, ſo ſhe caſteth out her wickedneſs. Before me continually is grief and wounds.* And yet when he had pronounced this fearful Sentence upon her, he tells her that all this miſery and deſolation might yet be prevented, if they would but hearken to the counſel of God, and be inſtructed by him concerning the things of their peace: For ſo it follows in the next words, *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited. Be thou inſtructed* O Jeruſalem, that is, do but now at laſt take that counſel and warning which hath ſo often and ſo long, been tender'd to thee by my ſervant the Prophet, who hath now for the ſpace of forty years continually, and that with great earneſtneſs and importunity, been warning thee of this danger, and calling thee to repentance and a better mind.

Leſt my ſoul depart from thee. In the Hebrew it is, *Leſt my ſoul be looſened and diſjointed from thee*, as it is in the margin of your Bibles; hereby ſignifying in the moſt emphatical manner, the wonderful affection and kindneſs which God had for his People, and how ſtrongly his ſoul was link'd to them, and how loth he was to withdraw his love from them; it was like the tearing off of a limb, or the plucking of a joint in ſunder; ſo unwilling is God to come to extremity; ſo hardly is he brought to reſolve upon the ruin even of a ſinful Nation: How much rather would he, that they would be inſtructed and receive correction, and hearken to the things of their peace? But if they will not be perſwaded, if no warning will work upon them, *his ſpirit will not always ſtrive with them*; but *his ſoul* will at laſt, though with great unwillingneſs and reluctance, depart from them.

And then, no interceſſion will prevail for them; as he threatens by the ſame Prophet, chap. 15. verſe 1. *Then ſaid the Lord unto me, though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this People; caſt them out of my ſight, and let them go forth; away with them into Captivity, for they have loſt my heart, and no interceſſion of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.*

And when his Soul is once departed from a People, and his heart turned againſt them, then all ſorts of evils and calamities will be let looſe upon them; as we may read in the next verſe of that Chapter: *And it ſhall come to paſs if they ſay unto thee, whither ſhall we go forth? Then ſhalt thou tell them, Thus ſaith the Lord, ſuch as are for death to death, and ſuch as are for the ſword to the ſword, and ſuch as are for the famine to the famine, and ſuch as are for the captivity to the captivity.* For then God will be weary of repenting, as he tells them, verſe 6. *Thou haſt forſaken me, ſaith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I ſtretch out my hand againſt thee, and deliver thee, I am weary of repenting.* By our obſtinate impenitency we harden the heart of God againſt us, and make him weary of repenting. And when his ſoul is thus departed from a People, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. *Wo unto them*, ſaith God by the Prophet, *when I depart from them. Therefore be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.* Having

Jer. 15. 2.

Hof. 9. 12.

Having given this account of the Words, I shall observe from them three things well worth our consideration.

First, The infinite goodness and patience of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*. How loth is He that things should come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and some kind of violence, as it were, offered to himself, brought to this severe resolution; his soul is, as it were, *rent and disjointed* from them.

Secondly, You see here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the misery and ruin of a sinful People. If they will be *instructed* and take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiser and better, then *his soul* will not depart from them, he will not bring upon them the *desolation* which he hath threatened.

Thirdly, You have here intimated the miserable case and condition of a People, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when *his soul* departs from them. For when God once leaves them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I shall speak as briefly as I can to these *Three* observations from the *Text*.

First, I observe the infinite patience and goodness of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited*. How loth is God that things should come to this? He is very patient to particular persons, notwithstanding their great and innumerable provocations. God is *strong and patient*, though men *provoke him every day*. And much greater is his patience to whole Nations and great Communities of men.

How great was it to the old World, *when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah*, for the space of an hundred and twenty years? And did not expire, till he saw that the wickedness of man was grown great upon the earth, and that all flesh had corrupted its way; not till it was necessary to drown the World to cleanse it, and to destroy Mankind to reform it, by beginning a new World upon the only righteous Family that was left of all the last generation of the old. For so God testifies concerning *Noah*, when he commanded him to enter into the Ark, saying, *Come thou and all thy house into the Ark; for thee, that is, thee only, have I seen righteous before me in this Generation*. I.

The patience of God was great likewise to *Sodom and Gomorrah* and the Cities about them. For when the cry of their sins had reached heaven, and called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon them, to express the wonderful patience of God toward such grievous Sinners, though nothing is hid from his sight and knowledge, yet he is represented as coming down from Heaven to Earth on purpose to enquire into the truth of things, and whether they were altogether according to the cry that was come up to him. And when he found things as bad as was possible, yet then was he willing to have come almost to the lowest terms imaginable, that if there had been but *ten righteous persons* in those wicked Cities, he would not have destroyed them for the ten's sake.

Nay, he seems to come to lower terms yet, with the City of *Jerusalem*, *Jer. 5. 1. Run ye too and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it*.

What can be imagin'd more slow, and mild, and merciful, than the proceedings of the Divine Justice against a sinful People? God is represented

in Scripture as taking a long time to *make ready his bow*, and to *whet his glittering sword*, before *his hand takes hold of vengeance*; as if the instruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and rusty and unready for use. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good man will step in and interpose to stay his hand? As we read *Psal. 106. 23. Therefore he said*, speaking of the People of *Israel*, *that he would destroy them, had not Moses his servant stood in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.* And how kindly doth God take it of *Phinehas*, as a most acceptable piece of service done to him, and which he hardly knew how sufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a stop to his anger against the People of *Israel*: Inasmuch that the Psalmist tells us, that *it was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations for evermore.* I will recite the whole passage at large, because it is remarkable. When the People of *Israel* were seduced into Idolatry and Whoredom by the Daughters of *Moab*, *Phinehas* in great zeal stood up and executed judgment upon *Zimri* and *Cozbi* in the very act: By which means the Plague which was broken out upon the Congregation of *Israel* was presently stayed. Hear what God says to *Moses* concerning this act of *Phinehas*. *The Lord spake unto Moses saying, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned away my wrath from the Children of Israel, whilst he was zealous for my sake that I consumed them not. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of Peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priest-hood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Israel: That which God takes so kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for Him, is, that he pacified God's wrath towards the Children of Israel.*

And thus did God from time to time deal with the People of *Israel*, that great Example of the Old Testament of the merciful methods of the Divine Providence towards a sinful Nation. And an Example, as *St. Paul* tells us, *purposely recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come.*

Let us therefore consider a little the astonishing patience of God towards that perverse People. After all the signs and wonders which he had wrought in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and for their support in the Wilderness; and notwithstanding their gross and stupid infidelity and horrible ingratitude to God their Saviour, and all their rebellious murmurings and discontents, yet he suffer'd their manners for the space of forty years.

And when they were at last peaceably settled in the promised Land; notwithstanding their frequent relapses into Idolatry, with what patience did God expect their repentance, and the result of all the merciful messages and warnings given them from time to time by his Prophets, as one that earnestly desir'd it, and even long'd for it? O *Jerusalem*, *wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* that is, how long wilt thou delude thy self with vain hopes of escaping the Judgments of God by any other way than by repentance? And again, O *Jerusalem*, *wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* And *chap. 8. ver. 6.* says God there, *I hearkened and I heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?* Where God is represented, after the manner of men, waiting with great patience, as one that would have been glad to have heard any penitent word drop from them, to have seen any sign of their repentance and return to a better mind.

And when they made some shews of repentance, and had some fits of good resolution that did presently vanish and come to nothing, how passionately does God complain of their fickleness and inconstancy? O *Ephraim*, *what shall I do unto thee: O Judah*, *what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away?*

And at last, when nothing would do, with what difficulty and reluctancy does God deliver them up into the hands of their Enemies? *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Judah? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not destroy Ephraim.* What a conflict is here? what tenderness and yearning of his bowels towards them? He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he is forced to it by the last necessity.

And when the Nation of the Jews, after their return from the Captivity of Babylon, had in the course of several Ages greatly corrupted themselves, and fill'd up the measure of their sins by crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory, yet how slow was the patience of God in bringing that fatal and final Destruction upon them? Not till after the most merciful warnings given to them, by the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour; not till after the most obstinate impenitency of forty years, under the most powerful means of Repentance that any People in the World ever enjoyed. I proceed to the

Second Observation from the Text, namely, What is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the ruin of a sinful People? And that is, if they will be instructed and take warning by the Threatnings of God to become wiser and better, then *his soul will not depart from them*, and he will not bring upon them the desolation threatned. *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited,* intimating, or rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive instruction and take warning, the evil threatn'd shall not come. For what other reason can there be, why God should threaten so long before he strikes, and so earnestly press men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to spare them, and to shew mercy to them?

And indeed, as I observ'd before, all the Denunciations and Threatnings of God to a sinful Nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that Nation turn from their evil ways, God will repent of the evil which he thought to do unto them. For God never passeth so irrevocable a Sentence upon a Nation, as to exclude the case of repentance: Nay on the contrary, He gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. *How often would I have gathered thee,* says our merciful Lord when we wept over Jerusalem, *as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not; therefore your House is left unto you desolate.*

God is very merciful to particular persons upon their repentance. When the Prodigal Son in the Parable, after all his riot and lewdness came to himself and resolv'd to return home, *his Father seeing him yet afar off coming towards him, came out to meet him, and had compassion on him and kissed him.* And can any of us be so obstinate and hard-hearted, as not presently to resolve to repent and return, and to meet the compassions of such a Father? Who, after we have offended him to the uttermost, is upon the first discovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could possibly have been if we had never offended him.

And much more is God ready to receive a Nation upon their sincere Repentance; when his Judgments must needs make great havock, and so many are like to suffer under them. This Consideration God urgeth and pleads with his froward Prophet, in behalf of the great City of Niniveh. *And shall not I spare that great City of Niniveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, who cannot discern their right hand from their left? that is, so many innocent Children, by which we may judge of the vast number of the*

II.

Hof. 11. 8, 9.

Jonah 4. 11.

the rest of the Inhabitants. For this is a great consideration with God in his sending of Publick Calamities, the multitude of the Sufferers ; and that not only the guilty but the innocent also, without a special and miraculous Providence, must be involved in a common Calamity.

Psal. 78.

Sometimes God respites his Judgment upon the mere external humiliation of a People and some formal testimonies and expressions of their repentance. When the People of Israel sought God and enquired early after him, though they did but flatter him with their mouth, and their heart was not right with him, yet the Psalmist tells us, *that being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not* ; that is, he forgave them so far as to respite their ruin.

And much more will a sincere and effectual Repentance stay God's hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceness of his anger : Insomuch that after he had fix'd and determin'd the very Day for the Destruction of *Niniveh*, and had engaged the credit of his Prophet in it, yet as soon as *he saw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways*, and how glad was he to see it ? he presently repented of the evil which he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not. In this Case God does not stand upon the reputation of his Prophet, by whom he had sent so peremptory a Message to them ; but his Mercy breaks through all considerations, and *rejoyceth against judgment* : For he cannot find in his heart to ruin those who by the terror of his Judgments will be brought to repentance.

And this surely is a mighty motive and encouragement to repentance, to be assur'd that we shall find mercy ; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the instruments of God's wrath are fix'd and ready for execution, and his hand is just taking hold of vengeance, yet even then a sincere repentance will mitigate his hottest displeasure and turn away his wrath. And if we will not come in upon these terms, we extort the Judgments of God from him, and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

III.

Thirdly and lastly, the Text intimates to us the miserable case and condition of a People when God takes off his heart and affection from them, when he gives over all further care and concernment for them, and abandons them to their own wickedness and folly, and to the miserable effects and consequences thereof : *Wo unto them, when his Soul departs from them* : For then all sorts of evils and calamities will rush in, and *wrath will come upon them to the uttermost* ; as was threaten'd to the *Jews* a little before their final destruction, and executed upon them in the most terrible and amazing manner that ever was from the foundation of the World. These, as our Blessed Saviour expresses it, were *days of vengeance* indeed, that *all things which were written*, that is, foretold by *Moses* and the *Prophets* concerning the fearful end of this perverse and stiff-neck'd People, *might be fulfilled*.

And because my Text speaks to *Jerusalem*, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited* ; though this was spoken to *Jerusalem* before her Captivity into *Babylon*, yet because this first Captivity was but a faint Type of her last and final Desolation by the *Romans*, when God's Soul was indeed departed from Her, and *Judea* was left desolate, a Land not inhabited : I shall therefore briefly represent to you the full effect of this Threatning in her last final Destruction, when God's Soul was, as it were, perfectly loosen'd and disjointed from Her : That you may see what the fierceness and power of God's Anger is, when he departs from them, and *wrath comes upon them to the uttermost*, because they would not be instructed and know the time of their visitation.

Thus it was with the *Jews*, about forty years after the Passion of our Lord,

Lord, whom *with wicked hands they had crucified and slain*: Then was God's soul departed from them: Then darkness and desolation came upon them; and they were in a far worse condition than a Country would be that is forsaken of the Sun and left condemn'd to a perpetual Night, in which darkness and disorder, faction and fury do reign and rage; together with all the fatal consequences of *zeal and strife*, which, St. James tells us, are *confusion and every evil work*. For when God is once gone, all the good and happiness of Mankind departs together with him: Then men fall foul upon one another, divide into Parties and Factions, and execute the vengeance of God upon themselves with their own hands.

Thus it happen'd to the *Jewish Nation*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and their final ruin was approaching. And that we might know their Fate, and be instructed by it, God provided and preserv'd a faithful Historian on purpose, who was an Eye witness of all that befel them: I mean *Josephus*, who was personally engaged, and was a considerable Commander in the Wars of the *Jews* with the *Romans*, before the Siege of *Jerusalem*: And during the Siege was present in the *Roman Camp*, and being a *Jew* himself hath transmitted these things to Posterity in a most exact and admirable History, such a History, as no man that hath the heart and bowels of a man can read without the greatest pity and astonishment.

In the Preface of that lamentable History he tells us, that all the misfortunes and calamities which the World from the beginning of it had seen, compar'd with this last Calamity of the *Jewish Nation*, were but slight and inconsiderable. He tells us likewise, that their Civil Diffensions were the next and immediate cause of their confusion and ruin.

And this more than once: For when *Pompey*, about sixty years before our Saviour's birth, fate down before *Jerusalem*, he tells us, * that the Factions and Divisions which they had among themselves were the cause of the taking the City and Temple at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the Heads of their Factions provok'd the *Romans*, and brought them unwillingly upon them, and at last forced the best natur'd Prince in the World, *Titus Vespasian*, to that severity which he most earnestly desired by all means to have prevented. And he further tells us, that even before the Siege of *Jerusalem*, the Cities of *Judea* had all of them Civil Discords among themselves, and that in every City one part of the *Jews* fought against another. * Lib. 1. c. 3.

And when *Jerusalem* began to be besieged, What a miserable condition was it in, by the cruelty of the *Zealots* under the command of *John* the Son of *Giorah*? And presently after another Faction arose under *Simon*, who enter'd into the City with a fresh Force and assaulted the *Zealots* in the Temple: so that most miserable havock was made between them. And then a third Faction started up under *Eleazar*, as bad as either of the other: So that infinite almost were the numbers of the People within the City that were barbarously slain by these Seditions. Lib. 4. c. 5.

And what an infatuation was this? when the Enemy was at the Gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole strength and force against one another: When the same courage and fury, which they spent so freely upon themselves, had it been turn'd with the like desperateness and obstinacy upon the *Romans*, might have endanger'd the whole force of the *Roman Empire*. Once or twice indeed they seem'd to lay aside their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence; but as soon as the danger of a present assault was over, they relaps'd into their former state of intestine enmity and dissention, as if that had been their main business, and the preservation of their City against the *Romans* only a work by the by, and not much to be regarded. Lib. 7. c. 1.

And

And to add to all their other miseries, they were so blinded by their own rage and madness, that they wilfully brought upon themselves an extreme Famine. For, as the *Historian* tells us, they themselves set on fire vast stores of Corn and other necessaries, sufficient to have serv'd them for many years; and by this means the City was much sooner reduc'd, even by a Famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themselves.

This Famine, besides all the other miseries and cruelties which it occasion'd within the City, did force great numbers of them to steal out by night into the *Roman Camp*; where they met with as cruel but a speedier death. For *Titus*, in hope to reduce them the sooner by terrour, order'd all those that came out of the City to be crucified before the Walls. Which order was so severely executed, that for several days five hundred a day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place Crosses in, nor Wood whereof to make them: So that they who once cried out so vehemently against our Saviour, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him*, had enough of it at last, and by the just and most remarkable Judgments of God were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the sad Fate of a sinful People, when God is departed from them! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their misery increased, so did their Impiety to that degree, that the *Historian* tells us, *they scorned and mocked at all divine and holy things, and derided the Oracles of the Prophets, esteeming them no better than Fables*; and, in a word, were carried to that extremity of wickedness, as not only to prophane their Temple in the highest manner, and to break the Laws of their own Religion, but even to violate the Laws of Nature and Humanity in the grossest Instances: which made their *Historian* to give that dismal character of them, *that as he thought no City ever suffer'd such things, so no Nation, from the beginning of the World, did ever so abound in all manner of wickedness and impiety*: A certain sign that God's Soul was departed from them.

And the same *Historian* afterwards, upon consideration of the lamentable state into which their Seditions had brought them, breaks out into this doleful lamentation over them, *O miserable City! what didst thou suffer from the Romans, though at last they set thee on fire to purge thee from thy sins, that is to be compar'd with those miseries which thou hast brought upon thy self?*

To such a dismal state did things come at last, that, as the same *Historian* relates, *many of the Jews prayed for the good success of their Enemies, to deliver them from their civil Dissensions, the Calamity whereof was so great, that their final Destruction by the Romans did rather put an end to their misery than increase it,*

—En ! quo discordia Cives
Perduxit miseros—

To conclude this sad Story. It was the *Jews* themselves that by their own folly and dissensions forc'd the *Romans* to this sorrowful Victory over them; for in truth all the remorse and pity was on the Enemies side. The *Romans* were little more than Spectators in this cruel Tragedy, the *Jews* acted it upon themselves: And they only who were arriv'd at that prodigious height of impiety and wickedness were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of God upon one another: As if the Prophet had foretold this, when he says, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.*

When impiety and wickedness are at their highest pitch in a Nation, then they themselves are the only proper instruments to punish one another. The *Romans* were by far too good and gentle to inflict a suffering upon the *Jews* that was equal to the evil of their doings: None but their own barbarous Selves,

Lib. 5. c. 2.

Lib. 6. c. 11.

Lib. 7. c. 1.

Jer. 2. 19.

Selves, who were sunk down, into the very lowest degeneracy of humane nature, were capable of so much cruelty and inhumanity as was requisite to execute the Judgment of God upon them to that degree which their sins had deserved.

You see, my Brethren, by what hath been said upon this Argument, what were the *Faults*, and what the *Fate* of the *Jewish Nation*. Now *these things*, as the *Apostle* expressly tells us, *were written for our Admonition*, and to the intent that *we upon whom the ends of the World are come* might be instructed by them: *We*, I say, who next to the *Jewish Nation* seem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations of the Earth. We resemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.

But as I intend it not, so God forbid that there should be any just ground for a full and exact Parallel between us; Yet this I must say, that nothing ever came nearer to them than We do in several respects. In our fickleness and inconstancy, in our murmurings and discontents; for we are never pleas'd with what God does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: We resemble them likewise in our horrible prophaneness and infidelity, and in our impiety and wickedness of several kinds: in our monstrous ingratitude and most unworthy returns to the God of our Salvation: and lastly, in our Factions and Divisions, which were the fatal sign of God's being departed from the *Jews*, and the immediate cause and means of those dismal Calamities which wrought their final Ruin. And how can we chuse but dread lest their Fate should overtake us, the Example of whose Faults and Follies we do in so many things so nearly resemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our Fate, let us apply our selves to the great Duties of this day; a serious and deep Repentance, and Humiliation of our selves before Almighty God for the many and heinous Sins which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, against His Divine Majesty; by our prophaneness and impiety, by our lewdness and luxury, by our oppression and injustice, by our implacable malice and hatred one towards another, and by our senseless divisions and animosities one against another, without cause and without end: By our neglect of God's Worship and prophanation of his Holy Day, and by our dreadful abuse of God's great and glorious Name in those horrid Oaths and Curses and Imprecations which are heard almost day and night in the streets of this great City.

For these and all other our innumerable provocations of the patience and goodness and long-suffering of God towards us, let us sadly repent our selves this Day, and *turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent our hearts and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God; For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil: And who knoweth if he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned: Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

And let us earnestly beg of Him, that he would be pleased to prevent those terrible Judgments and Calamities which hang over us, and which our Sins have so justly deserved should fall upon us: And that He would perfect that wonderful Deliverance which he hath begun for us, and *establish the thing which he hath wrought*: That He would bless *Them* whom he hath set in Authority over us; and particularly, that he would preserve the Person of the *King* in his present Expedition, and crown him with victory and good success.

And to our Repentance and Prayers let us add our liberal Alms, and according to the counsel given by the *Prophet* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us *break off*

off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if so be it may be a lengthening of our tranquility.

We are yet, blessed be God, in the full enjoyment of Peace and Quiet at home, and of our Religion and Civil Liberties. God hath given us two excellent Princes sitting on the Throne together, and both of the same Religion with the main Body of the Nation; and as bright Examples of Piety and Goodness as *England* ever saw: And who do by all ways and means study and seek the good of the People committed to their charge.

So that if we did but know our own happiness, and how to value it, we might be the happiest People this day under Heaven: And yet for all this, we are very far from being happy; because we are neither contented, nor united; and though we have all the materials of Happiness about us, and within our reach, yet have we not the skill and wisdom to put them together.

Miserable People! that may be happy and will not; whom neither so fresh a Deliverance from so great a Danger as was just ready to have swallowed us up, nor the fear and apprehension of falling again into the like confusion, can be a warning to us from returning again unto the same folly: For those odious and unhappy Names of Difference which some years ago sprang up among us, the Devil knows how, did seem whilst a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried: But no sooner was the danger over, but by a kind of *miraculous* infatuation, behold a sudden *Resurrection* of them, with greater heats and animosities, if possible, than before: Just as it was with the *Jews* in the Siege of *Jerusalem*, when the *Romans* had made a wide breach and the City was furiously assaulted, the *Factions* then gave *Truce* to one another, and ran in to the common defence; but as soon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afresh and prosecuted their main design of destroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us also, how like a Fate upon us does it look, that we are so soon alter'd from our wiser and better temper? Did we well and wisely before our late happy Revolution, when we united for our common defence against a common danger, and did let those *unlucky Names* of distinction fall, so that they seem'd to be quite extinguish'd? And can it be now wise to revive them, and to take them up again; when the same danger in some degree, and from the same implacable Enemies, still hovers over us? No surely, it would not be wise, if the danger were quite past and over; but when it still remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than still to divide and quarrel among our selves? Will nothing but sad and bitter experience be an admonition to us? Will nothing but the last necessity and extremity of things bring us to our selves and teach us wisdom?

Methinks we should all now be glad to be at rest, after the tedious troubles and distractions, the fruitless quarrels and divisions of fifty years. So long I remember; and in all that space how very few years pass'd over us without some great Calamity and dismal Event. So that by this time one would think we should all be sick of our own follies, and so tir'd with our unprofitable feuds and dissensions, as to make both sides look about them, to see if any body will take pity on us, and step in to part our quarrels.

And now I begin to be sensible, that I have engag'd in a tender Point indeed; and do feel my self standing upon a very slippery place. For who is fit to interpose in such hot and fierce differences? who can do it without danger, or with any hopes of success? And yet for *Zion's* sake I will not hold my peace, for *Jerusalem's* sake I will not keep silence: Of so great consequence is it

to the peace and happiness of this Church and Nation, that these Names and Distinctions of Parties should be laid down and abolish'd for ever.

In order whereunto I take it for granted and lay it for a Principle, that he who hopes to persuade both sides must provoke neither: And therefore I will not so much as enquire where the fault lyes. It is in these Civil Differences as in Family quarrels between Man and Wife, if any man ask on which side lyes the fault; one may almost safely answer at a venture, on both sides. It must indeed begin on one, but if it be not presently heal'd and made up, the other Party is always so civil as to run in and take a share of the fault, that all the blame may not lye wholly on one side.

And now, my Brethren, let me for once persuade and prevail with you for your good: Let me be so happy as to say something that may sink into you hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good agreement with one another, *Have salt in your selves*, says our *Blessed Saviour* the great *Peacemaker*, and *peace one with another*. By Salt is meant grace and spiritual wisdom, and if that do but rule and sway in our hearts, we shall then endeavour, if it be possible, and as much as in us lyes, to live peaceably with all men. If we have salt in our selves, that is, if we be wise, we will then certainly have peace one with another.

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and distracted Nation, we should not then need to fear *all the power of the Enemy*. And this our Enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wisdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakness if we suffer our selves to be divided: For who that is wise will take counsel and advice from an Enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our *Jerusalem* would be as *a City that is compact together*, strong and impregnable.

Let us then be instructed, and know, in this our day, the things which belong to our Peace, before they be hid from our eyes. And let us all earnestly endeavour, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *They shall prosper that love her*, says the Psalmist, and they do not love her, that do not seek her peace and endeavour by all means to procure it: *That Peace may be within her Walls, and Prosperity within her Palaces*: The one cannot be without the other: without Peace there can be no Prosperity. And to go on with the words of the Psalmist, let every one of us say, yea let us all with one heart and voice say, for our Brethren and Companions sake, for the sake of our Protestant Brethren all the World over, let us say, *Peace be within thee: For the House of the Lord our God*, for the sake of our Holy Religion, and of that excellent Church whereof we all are, or ought to be Members, let every one of us say, *I will seek thy good*. Psal. 122.

And what greater good can we do to the best Religion, how can we better serve the interest of it in all parts of the World, than by being at peace and unity amongst our selves, here in England? upon whom the eyes of all the Protestants abroad are fixed, as the Glory of the Reformation, and the great bulwark and support of it.

That so under the Providence of Almighty God, and the conduct of two such excellent Princes as He hath now bless'd us withal: The one so brave and valiant, and Both of them so wise, so good, so religious, we may at last arrive at a firm establishment, and become like mount Zion that cannot be moved, the perfection of Beauty and Strength, and the admiration and joy of the whole Earth; which God of his infinite goodness grant, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ: To whom with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thanksgiving and praise both now and ever, Amen.

S E R M O N XXXVIII.

*A Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men.**Preached before the Queen at WHITEHALL,
February the 27th. 169^o.*

A C T S XXVI. 16.

*And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Con-
science void of offence towards God, and towards
Men.*

These Words are part of the Defence which St. Paul made for himself before *Felix* the Roman Governour.

In which he first of all vindicates himself from the charge of Sedition, *vers. 12.* They neither found me in the Temple, disputing with any man; neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogue, nor in the City; that is, they could not charge him with making any disturbance either in Church or State.

After this, he makes a free and open profession of his Religion, *vers. 14.* But this I confess, that after the way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets: Here he declares the Scriptures to be the Rule of his Faith, in opposition to the Oral Tradition of the Pharisees.

More particularly he asserts the Doctrine of the Resurrection, which was a principle Article both of the Jewish and the Christian Religion, *vers. 15.* And I have hope also towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.

And having made this declaration of his Faith, he gives an account of his Life in the words of the Text, *vers. 16.* And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.

Herein, *ἐν τούτῳ*, that is, in this work, do I employ my self; or as others render it, in the meantime, whilst I am in this World; or as others, I think most probably, for this cause and reason, *ἐν τούτῳ*, for *διὰ τούτο*, for this reason, because I believe a Resurrection, therefore have I conscientious care of my life, and all the actions of it.

The Discourse I intend to make upon these words, shall be comprized in these following Particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men.

II. Here

II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course ; to have *always* a conscience void of offence.

III. Here is his earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, *I exercise my self.*

IV. Here is the principle and immediate Guide of his Actions, which St. Paul here tells us was his *Conscience*.

V. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a good Conscience.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to this, which St. Paul tells us was the belief of a Resurrection, and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments consequent upon it ; for *this Cause* ; because *I hope for a Resurrection both of the just and unjust, I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* I shall speak but briefly to the three first of these Particulars, that I may be larger in the rest.

I. *Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice.* It hath regard to the whole compass of his Duty, as it respects God and Man. *I exercise my self* says St. Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* And this distribution of our Duty, under these two general Heads, is very frequent in Scripture. The Decalogue refers our Duty to these two Heads : And accordingly our Saviour comprehends the whole Duty of Man in those two great Commandments, the love of God and of our Neighbour, Matth. 22. 38. *Upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,* that is, all the Moral Precepts, which are dispers'd up and down in the Law and the Prophets, may be referr'd to these two general Heads.

II. *Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course.* St. Paul says, that he exercised himself to have *always* a conscience void of offence ; *ἀπαυλῶς*, continually, at all times, in the whole course of his life. We must not only make conscience of our ways by fits and starts, but in the general course and tenour of our lives and actions, without any balks and intermissions.

There are some that will refrain from grosser Sins, and be very strict at some Seasons ; as during the Time of a Solemn Repentance, and for some days before they receive the Sacrament ; and perhaps for a little while after it : And when these devout Seasons are over, they let themselves loose again to their former lewd and vicious course : But Religion should be a constant frame and temper of mind, discovering it self in the habitual course of our lives and actions.

III. *Here is likewise a very earnest care and endeavour to this purpose.* Herein do *I exercise my self*, says St. Paul. The word *ἀσκήω*, which is here render'd *exercise*, is a word of a very intense signification, and does denote that St. Paul applied himself to this business with all his care and might, and that he made it his earnest study and endeavour : And so must we ; we must take great care to understand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning good and evil, that we may not mistake the nature of things, and call good evil, and evil good : We must apply our minds in good earnest to be thoroughly instructed in all the parts of our Duty, that so we may not be at a loss what to do when we are call'd to the practice of it. And when we know our Duty, we must be true and honest to our selves, and very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. I proceed in the

IVth Place to consider the principle and immediate Guide of our Actions, which St. Paul here tells us was his *Conscience* ; *I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence* : By which he does not only mean a resolution to follow the dictate and direction of his Conscience, but likewise a due care to inform his Conscience aright, that he might not in any thing transgress the Law of God, and his Duty.

Conscience

Conscience is the great Principle of moral Actions, and our Guide in matter of Sin and Duty. It is not the Law and Rule of our Actions, *that* the Law of God only is; but it is our immediate Guide and Director, telling us what is the Law of God and our Duty.

But because *Conscience* is a word of a very large and various signification, I shall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common speech concerning *Conscience*, every man is represented as having a kind of *Court* and *Tribunal* in his own breast, where he tries himself and all his Actions: And *Conscience*, under one Notion or other, sustains all parts in this Trial: The *Court* is called the *Court* of a man's *Conscience*, and the *Barr* at which the Sinner stands impleaded, is call'd the *Barr* of *Conscience*: *Conscience* also is the *Accuser*; and it is the *Record* and *Register* of our Crimes, in which the memory of them is preserv'd: And it is the *Witness* which gives testimony for, or against us; hence are those expressions of *the testimony of our Consciences*, and that *a man's own Conscience is to him instead of a thousand Witnesses*: And it is likewise the *Judge* which declares the Law, and what we ought, or ought not to have done, in such or such a Case, and accordingly passeth Sentence upon us by *acquitting* or *condemning* us. Thus, according to common use of Speech, *Conscience* sustains all imaginable parts in this *Spiritual Court*: It is the *Court*, and the *Bench*, and the *Barr*; the *Accuser*, and *Witness*, and *Register*, and all.

But I shall only at present consider *Conscience* in the most common and famous Notion of it, as it is the Principle or Faculty whereby we judge of moral Good and Evil, and do accordingly direct and govern our Actions: So that in short, *Conscience* is nothing else but *the Judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions*; that is, the *Good*, or *Evil*, or *Indifferency* of them; telling us what things are commanded by God, and consequently are our *Duty*; what things are forbidden by Him, and consequently are *sinful*; what things are neither commanded nor forbidden, and consequently are *indifferent*. I proceed in the

V. Vth Place, to give some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a conscience void of offence. And they shall be these following:

First, Never in any case to act contrary to the perswasion and conviction of our Conscience. For *that* certainly is a great Sin, and that which properly offends the Conscience and renders us *guilty*, *guilt* being nothing else but trouble arising in our minds from a consciousness of having done contrary to what we are verily perswaded was our Duty: And though perhaps this perswasion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the same so long as this perswasion continues; because every man's Conscience is a kind of God to him, and accuseth or absolves him according to the present perswasion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend against the light and conviction of our own mind.

Secondly, We should be very careful to inform our Consciences aright, that we may not mistake concerning our Duty; or if we do, that our error and mistake may not be grossly wilful and faulty.

And this Rule is the more necessary to be consider'd and regarded by us, because generally men are apt to think it a sufficient excuse for any thing, that they did it according to their Conscience. But this will appear to be a dangerous mistake, and of very pernicious consequence to the Souls of men, if we consider these two things.

1st, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conscience.

2^{dly}, And these Sins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them.

1st, That

1st, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins, in following an erroneous Conscience. Men may neglect and abuse themselves so far, as to do some of the worst and wickedest things in the World with a persuasion that they do well. Our Saviour tells his Disciples that *the time should come when the Jews should put them to death, thinking they did God good service*: Nay, the Jews murdered the Son of God himself through ignorance and a false persuasion of mind: *Father, forgive them*, says our Blessed Lord, when he was breathing out his Soul upon the Cross, *for they know not what they do*. And St. Peter, after he had charged the Jews with killing the Prince of Life, he presently adds, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers*. And St. Paul, in mitigation of that great Crime, says, *Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Life and Glory*: And concerning himself, he tells us, *That he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth*: And yet notwithstanding that he acted herein according to the persuasion of his Conscience, he tells us that he had been a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, and a murderer, and in a word, *the greatest of Sinners*. So that men may be guilty of the greatest Sins in following an erroneous Conscience. And,

John 16. 2.

Luke 23. 34.

Acts 3. 17.

Acts 26. 9.

2^{dly}, These sins may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them. Where the ignorance and mistake is not grossly wilful, there God will accept of a general repentance; but where it is grossly wilful, great Sins committed upon it are not pardon'd without a particular Repentance for them: And an error which proceeds from want of ordinary humane Care and due Government of a man's self, is in a great degree wilful: As when it proceeds from an unreasonable and obstinate prejudice, from great pride and self-conceit, and contempt of counsel and instruction; or from a visible byass of self-interest, or when it is accompanied with a furious passion and zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things, contrary to the light of nature and the common sense of humanity: An error proceeding from such causes, and producing such effects, is wilful in so high a degree, that whatever evil is done in virtue of it is almost equally faulty with a direct and wilful violation of the law of God.

The ignorance and mistake doth indeed make the person so mistaken more capable of forgiveness, which is the ground of our Saviour's Prayer for his Murderers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: St. Paul likewise tells us, that he found mercy upon this account, *Nevertheless*, says he, *I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief*, that is, through a false persuasion of mind, not believing it to be a Sin: And yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. Peter after he had convinced the Jews of their great Sin in crucifying Christ, though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to the pardon and forgiveness of it: And therefore after he had said, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers*; he immediately adds, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out*.

1 Tim. 1. 13.

Acts 3. 19.

So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they embrace in order to practice, and not to suffer themselves to be hurried away by an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion, without a due and calm examination of things, not to be over-born by pride, or humour, or partiality, or interest, or by a furious and extravagant zeal: Because proportionably to the voluntariness of our Error will be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that Error. Indeed where our Error is involuntary, and morally invincible, God will consider it, and make allowance for it; but where it is voluntary,

and

and occasioned by our own gross faults and neglect, we are bound to consider, and to rectify our mistake : For whatever we do contrary to the Law of God and our Duty, in virtue of that false perswasion, we do it at our utmost peril, and must be answerable to God for it, notwithstanding we did it according to the dictate of our Conscience.

A *Third* Rule is this, that in all doubts of Conscience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one side, when there is perhaps as much or greater reason of doubting on the other : And consequently, that we be as tractable and easie to receive satisfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in Cases that are equal : I mean, where our Passions and Interests are not concern'd, as well as where they are. And if we do not do this, it is a sign that we are partial in our pretences of Conscience, and that we do not aim meerly at the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, but have some other interest and design.

For it is a very suspicious thing, when men's doubts and scruples bear all on one side, especially if it be on that side which is against Charity, and Peace, and obedience to Government, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil : In this case I think that a meer doubt, and much more a scruple, may, nay, ought in reason to be over-ruled by the Command of Authority, by the opinion and judgment of wise and good men, and in consideration of the publick Peace, and of the unity and edification in the Church.

Not that a man is in any case to go against the clear perswasion and conviction of his own mind, but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing, it seems to me in that case very reasonable that a man should suffer a meer doubt or scruple to be over-ruled by any of those weighty considerations which I mention'd before.

The *Fourth* Rule is, that all pretences of Conscience are vehemently to be suspected, which are accompanied with turbulent passion and a furious zeal. It is an hundred to one but such a man's Conscience is in the wrong. It is an excellent saying of St. James, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, that is, the fierce passions of men are no proper instruments to promote Religion, and to accomplish any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be transported with a wild zeal, and pretend conscience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an error : None are so likely to judge amiss, as they whose minds are clouded and blinded by their passions.

Jam 1. 20.

Boeth.

*Nubila mens est,
Hæc ubi regnant,*

And if men would carefully observe themselves, they might almost certainly know when they act upon Reason and a true Principle of Conscience. A good Conscience is easie to it self, and pleased with its own doings ; but when a man's passion and discontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do, as it were, bear down his Conscience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneasy state.

There can hardly be a broader sign that a man is in the wrong, than to *rage and be confident* : Because this plainly shews that the man's Conscience is not settled upon clear reason, but that he hath brought over his Conscience to his interest, or to his humour and discontent.

And though such a man may be so far blinded by his passion as not to see what is right, yet methinks he should feel himself to be in the wrong by his being so very hot and impatient.

Art thou sure thou art in the right ? thou art a happy man, and hast reason to be pleased : What cause then, what need is there of being angry ? Hath

a man Reason on his side? What would he have more? Why then does he fly out into passion? which as it gives no strength to a bad argument, so I could never yet see that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

Of the great evil, and the perpetual mistake of this furious kind of Zeal, the Jews are a lively and a lamentable Example, in their carriage towards our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles: And more particularly St. Paul, when he persecuted the Christians from a false and erroneous perswasion of his Conscience. Here how St. Paul describes himself and his own doings whilst he was acted by an erroneous Conscience: *I persecuted*, says he, *this way unto* Acts 22. 4. *the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women*: And in another Chapter, *I verily thought with my self, that I ought to do many things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth*: Here was his erroneous Conscience. Acts 26. 9.

Let us next see what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it; *vers. 10, 11. Which things*, says he, *I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the Saints I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them, and punish'd them oft in every Synagogue, and compell'd them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange Cities*. When Conscience transports men with such a furious zeal and passion, it is hardly ever in the right; or if it should happen to be so, they who are thus transported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cause, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong, even when they are in the right.

Fifthly, All pretences of Conscience are likewise to be suspected, which are not accompanied with modesty and humility, and a teachable temper and disposition, willing to learn and to be better inform'd. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into mistakes; because pride and fulness of a man's self does keep out knowledge, and obstructs all the passages by which wisdom and instruction should enter into men: Besides that it provokes God to abandon men to their own follies and mistakes; for *God resisteth the proud, but the meek will he guide in judgment*, and *will give more grace and wisdom to the humble*. When men are once come to this, to think themselves wiser than their Teachers, and to despise and cast off their Guides, no wonder if then they go astray.

Lastly, Let us be sure to mind that which is our plain and unquestionable Duty: the great things of Religion, wherein the life and substance of it doth consist; and *the things likewise which make for peace, and whereby we may edifie one another*: And let us not suffer our Disputes about lesser matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: But let it be our great care not to fail in those greater things which are comprehended under the *two great Commandments of the Law*, the Love of God and of our Neighbour: Let us be strict and constant in our piety and devotion towards God; chaste and temperate in reference to *our selves*; just and honest, kind and charitable; humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards *all men*; submissive and obedient to our Superiours, *Natural, Civil, and Spiritual*. A due regard to these great Virtues of the Christian life is the way to *keep a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men*: And surely the best means to have our doubts cleared about matters of lesser moment in Religion, is heartily to set about the practice of the great and unquestionable Duties of it: So our Blessed Saviour hath assur'd us, that *if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of his Doctrine whether it be of God*. I come now in the John 7. 17

VI. With and Last place, to consider the great Motive and Encouragement to this conscientious care of our Lives and Actions; which St. Paul here tells us was his belief of a Resurrection, and of the Rewards and Punishments consequent

quent upon it ; *I have hope, says he, towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection both of the just and unjust : For this cause therefore I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.*

If we believe *the Resurrection of the dead and a future judgment*, we ought to be very careful to discharge a good Conscience *now*, in order to the rending of a good *Account* hereafter ; that *we may be sincere and without offence, with respect to the day of Christ*, as the *Apostle* expresseth it. For when that great Day of Recompences shall come, we shall most assuredly find that nothing will *then* raise our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witness of a good Conscience : And therefore we should make that our constant care and companion *now*, which will *then* be our great comfort and rejoicing, a good Conscience and *the testimony* of it, *that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the Great Judge of the World, nothing will fill our minds with so much terrour, and our faces with so much confusion, as the clamorous accusations of a guilty Conscience ; which will be *more than a thousand witnesses* against us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and pass almost as severe a Sentence upon us as the Judge himself can.

This is that which will make the sinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever : And one of the principal ingredients of his misery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorse of his own mind for his wilful wickedness and folly ; which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quench'd.

This consideration ought to have a mighty Operation upon us to make us very careful to have Consciences void of offence *now*, that they may be free from torment and anguish *hereafter* : That when we shall come into the other World, we may not be eternally displeas'd with our selves, and enrag'd at our own doings ; but may carry with us thither Consciences clear of all guilt, either by Innocency, or by Repentance.

The firm belief of a future state of eternal Happiness or Misery in another World, is the great Weight or Spring that sets a going those two powerful Principles of Humane Activity, the Hopes and the Fears of men ; and is in its Nature so fitted to raise these Passions to that degree, that did not experience shew us the contrary, one would think it morally impossible for humane Nature to resist the mighty force of it.

All men are sensible, more or less, at one time or other, of the true force of these Arguments ; but the mischief is, that in some persons they work quite the wrong way, and instead of leading men to Repentance, they drive them to Infidelity : They cannot deny the force of these Arguments, if they were true ; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true : And so far they are in the right, that granting these things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwise than they do : But here is their fatal miscarriage, that being resolved upon an evil course, since they cannot reconcile their practice with such Principles as these, they will fit their Principles to their practice ; and so they will believe nothing at all of the Rewards and Punishments of another World, lest this should disturb them in their course ? Vain men ! as if Heaven and Hell must needs vanish and disappear, because some witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

These men are Infidels in their own defence, and meerly for the quiet of their own minds ; that their Consciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right Belief and an evil Conscience are but unsuitable

ble Companions ; they are quarrelsome Neighbours, and must needs live very uneasily by one another. He that believes the Principles of Religion, and yet is conscious to himself that he hath liv'd contrary to them, and still continues to do so, how can he possibly have any peace and quiet in his mind ? unless like *Jonah* he can sleep in a storm, and his *Conscience* be, as it were, *seared with a hot Iron* : For if his *Conscience* be awake, and in any degree sensible, the evident danger of eternal ruine, continually hanging over him, must in reason either drive him to repentance or to despair : If so forcible and violent an Argument can make no impression upon us, we are stupid and bewitch'd, we are lost and undone, we are wretched and miserable for ever.

But besides the future Reward of a holy and conscientious course, which is *unspeakable and full of glory* ; it hath also this present fruit, this *earnest*, as I may say, and ready money in hand, the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable *than thousands of gold and silver*, the unspeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath most need of it : For it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the sorest afflictions and calamities of Life, but even at the hour of Death ; when the miseries of life oppress him, and the sorrows of death compass him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no such comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witness in our breasts of our own innocency and integrity : When we are afflicted by God, or persecuted and revil'd by men, it cannot but be a mighty consolation to us to be conscious to our selves of our own sincerity. For though no man can acquit and justify himself before God as to the perfect innocency of his life, in which sense *St. Paul* says, that *though he knew nothing by himself, yet was he not thereby justified* ; I say, though no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general course and tenour of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to God, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him as a tender and compassionate Father, and not as an angry and revengeful Judge. 1 Cor. 4. 4.

With this, holy and patient *Job*, under all those terrible disasters and calamities which beset him, was able in some measure to comfort himself : After he had lost all, and he had a great deal to lose ; when he was forsaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his best Friends concerning his sincerity. In these sad and disconsolate circumstances, what was it that bore up his spirit ? nothing but the conscience of his own integrity. See with what resolution and constancy of mind he asserts and maintains it : *I will not, says he, remove mine integrity from me : my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go : mine heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live* : You see, that when every thing else was gone, his integrity stuck by him, and supported him to the last. Job 25. 5, 6.

And as to persecutions and sufferings from men, our own innocency, and the goodness of our Cause, will be our best comfort under them : When we are not guilty to our selves that we have deserv'd them from men, and are inwardly assur'd that whatever we patiently suffer for God and a good Conscience, will all turn to our account another Day, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*.

This was *that* which supported the first *Christians*, that noble Army of *Martyrs*, under all those bitter and cruel persecutions, which had otherwise been beyond all humane patience to have endur'd : This comforted them in all their tribulations ; *Our rejoicing, says St. Paul, is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.*

So likewise under that inferiour but equally malicious sort of persecution, of which this Age is so very profuse and prodigal, I mean the causeless Calumnies and Reproaches of Men: If under these we can but approve our Consciences to God, the uncharitable Censures of men are not so much to be regarded by us: some impression they will make upon a tender mind, but we must not, if we can help it, let them sink too deep into our spirits: *If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God*; and then surely much more towards men: If God and our own Consciences do but acquit us, methinks it should be no such difficult matter to bear the slanders and hard censures of men.

But above all other times, the comfort of a good Conscience is most sensible, and most considerable, at the hour of Death: For as nothing dejects a man's spirit more, and sends him down with so much sorrow to the Grave, as the guilt of an evil Conscience; what terrour and anguish, what rage and despair do seize upon a Sinner at that time, when he reflects upon what he hath done, and considers what he is like to suffer? So on the other hand, there is nothing that revives and raises the fainting spirits of a dying man, like the Conscience of a holy and useful life, which hath brought glory to God, and good to men. *The wicked, says Solomon, is driven away in his wickedness*, that is, he is carried out of the World, as it were, in a storm and tempest: *But the righteous hath hope in his death*; he usually dies calmly and comfortably: *Mark the perfect Man, says David, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.*

If a man be conscious to himself that he hath sincerely endeavour'd to keep the Commandments of God, and to do the things which please Him; if he hath lived inoffensively, and, as St. Paul says of himself, *in all good conscience before God and men*; what an unspeakable consolation must it be to him, in that dark and gloomy time, and when he is *walking through the valley of the shadow of death*, then to fear no evil? and to be able with our Blessed Saviour to say, though in a much inferiour measure and degree, *Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do*: And to be able to look Death in the face with the like courage and constancy of mind as St. Paul did when he saw it approaching towards him: *I am now, says he, ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at hand*; *I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.* A comfortable Death, that is free from the stings and upbraidings, the terrours and tortures, the confusion and amazement of a guilty Conscience, is a happiness so desirable, as to be well worth the best care and endeavour of a man's whole life.

Let us then have a conscientious regard to the whole compass of our Duty, and with St. Paul, *Let us exercise our selves to have always a Conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men*: And let us never do any thing whereby we shall offer violence to the light of our minds. God hath given us this Principle to be our constant guide, and companion; and whoever, after due care to inform himself aright, does sincerely follow the dictate and direction of this Guide, shall never fatally miscarry: But whoever goes against the clear dictate and conviction of his Conscience, in so doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and sins against God and his own Soul.

And to the end we may keep our Consciences clear of guilt, we should frequently examine our selves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our selves to a strict account for them; that wherein soever we have fail'd of

of innocency, we may make it up by repentance ; and may get our Consciences clear'd of guilt by pardon and forgiveness : And if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the testimony of our Consciences ; because many great Sins may slip out of our memories without a particular repentance for them, which yet do require and stand in need of a particular repentance.

Especially we should search our Consciences more narrowly at these more solemn Times of Repentance, and when we are preparing our selves to receive the Holy Sacrament : And if at these Times our hearts do accuse and condemn us for any thing, we should not only heartily lament and bewail it before God, but sincerely resolve by God's Grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that Sin which we have then repented of, and have ask'd forgiveness of God for : For if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our Consciences afresh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the last place, We should reverence our Consciences, and stand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their testimony and verdict : For Conscience is a Domestick Judge, and a kind of familiar God : And therefore, next to the Supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, every man should be afraid to offend his own Reason and Conscience, which whenever we knowingly do amiss, will beat us with many stripes, and handle us more severely than the greatest Enemy we have in the World : So that next to the dreadful Sentence of the great Day, every man hath reason to dread the Sentence of his own Conscience. *God indeed is greater than our hearts, and knows all things ;* but under Him we have the greatest reason to fear the judgment of our own Consciences : For nothing but that can give us Comfort, and nothing can create so much trouble and disquiet to us.

And though the judgment of our Consciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reason to have great regard to it ; and that upon several Accounts, which I shall but briefly mention, and so conclude.

First, Because the judgment of our Conscience is free from any compulsion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no ; and make us to pass sentence against our selves, whether we see reason for it or not.

Secondly, The sentence of our own Consciences is very likely to be impartial, at least not too hard on the severe side, because men naturally love themselves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own case : All the World cannot bribe a man against himself : There is no man whose mind is not either distemper'd by melancholy, or deluded by false Principles, that is apt to be credulous against himself, and his own interest and peace.

Thirdly, The judgment which our Conscience passeth upon our own Actions, is upon the most intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of the true motives and ends. We may easily be deceiv'd in our judgment of the Actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worse than in truth they are : Because we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what circumstances there may be to excuse or aggravate them ; how strong the temptation was, or how weak the judgment of him that was seduc'd by it into error and folly.

But we are conscious to all the secret springs, and motives, and circumstances of our own actions : We can descend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and search into the most retired corners of our intentions and ends ; which none, besides our selves, but only God can do ; for excepting *Him only, none knows the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, The Sentence of our Conscience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou maist possibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermost parts of the Earth, but thou canst not stir one step from thy self: In vain shalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee and hide thee from the sight of thine own Conscience.

Wretched and miserable man! when thou hast offended and wounded thy Conscience: For whither canst thou go, to escape the eye of this Witness, the terror of this Judge, the torment of this Executioner? A man may as soon get rid of himself, and quit his own being, as fly from the sharp Accusations and stinging Guilt of his own Conscience; which will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by repentance and forgiveness.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by evil Spirits, and yet the Spirit of a man which is in him, thoroughly affrighted with its own Guilt, may be a more ghastly and amazing Spectacle than all the Devils in Hell: There is no such frightful Apparition in the World, as a man's own guilty and terrible Conscience staring him in the face: *A spirit that is thus wounded, who can bear?*

To conclude; Let these considerations prevail with us always to live, not with regard to the opinion of others, which may be grounded upon mistake, or may not indeed be their opinion, but their flattery; but with regard to the judgment of our own Conscience, which though it may sometimes be mistaken, can never be brib'd and corrupted: We may be hypocrites to others and base flatterers, but our Consciences whenever they are thoroughly awaken'd are always sincere, and deal truly with us, and speak to us as they think.

Therefore whatever we say or do, let it be sincere: For though hypocrisy may for a while preserve our esteem and reputation with others, yet it can signify nothing to the peace of our own minds: And then what will it avail us to conceal any thing from other men, when we can hide nothing that we say or do from our own Consciences?

The Sum of all is this: If we would keep a Conscience void of offence, let us always be calm and considerate, and have the patience to examine things thoroughly and impartially: Let us be humble and willing to learn, and never too proud and stiff to be better inform'd: Let us do what we can to free our selves from prejudice and passion, from self-conceit and self-interest, which are often too strong a bias upon the judgments of the best men, as we may see every day in very sad and melancholy instances: And having taken all due care to inform our Consciences aright, let us follow the judgment of our minds in what we do; and then we have done what we can to please God.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good Conscience, we should always be easie, and good company to our selves: But if we offend our Consciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappiest breach in the World; we stir up a quarrel in our own breasts, and arm our own minds against our selves; we create an enemy to our selves in our own bosoms, and fall out with the best and most inseparable Companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, a good Conscience will be a continual Feast, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day which nothing else can: And then whatever happen to us, we may commit our selves to God in well-doing, *into the hands of a faithful Creatour, To whom with our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost the Comforter, be all honour and glory, now and ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N XXXIX.

How to keep a truly Religious Fast.

Preached before the Queen at WHITEHALL,

September the 16th 1691.

Z E C H. VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME; EVEN UNTO ME?



IN the beginning of this Chapter the People of the Jews, who were then rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finish'd till about two years after, send to the Priests and the Prophets, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the Fast of the fifth Month, which they had begun in Babylon and continued to observe during the seventy Years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of Feasting and Gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an Answer in this, and the following Chapter. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did indeed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence of a Religious Fast, *vers. 4, 5.* Then came the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying; *Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* The enquiry was particularly concerning the Fast of the fifth Month, because the occasion of that was more considerable than of all the other; but the Answer of God mentions the Fasts of the fifth and seventh Months, these two being probably observ'd with greater solemnity than the other.

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the original and occasion of all their Monthly Fasts: which as appears from other places of Scripture, in short, was this: When the Jews were carried away Captive into Babylon, in a deep sense of this great Judgment of God upon

on them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed *four annual Fasts*, which they observed during their seventy years Captivity, viz. the *Fast of the fourth Month*, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the Wall of *Jerusalem*, which we find mention'd, *Jer. 52. 6, 7.* The *Fast of the fifth Month*, in memory of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, verses 12, 13. The *Fast of the seventh Month*, in remembrance of the slaying of *Gedaliah*, upon which followed the dispersion of the *Jews*, of which we have an account, *Jer. 42. 1, 2.* And the *Fast of the tenth Month*, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of *Jerusalem*, of which we find mention, *2 Kings 25. 1.*

In this order we find these *four Annual Fasts* mention'd, *Zechar. 8. 19.* not according to the order of the Events, but of the Months of the several Years in which these events happened: And there likewise God gives a full Answer to this Enquiry concerning the continuance of these *annual Fasts*, namely, That they should for the future be turned into solemn Days of Joy and Gladness.

Zechar. 8. 18, 19. And the word of the Lord of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth Month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of Judah joy and gladness, and chearful Feasts.

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* that is, did these *Fasts* truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this Chapter; *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying; Execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart: But they refused to hearken, and pull'd away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant-stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

Verse 9, 10,
11, 12, 13.

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zachary* calls *fasting unto Him, even unto him*, the Prophet *Isaiah* calls the *Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord.* Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer, &c.

From

From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the *Jews* were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the *Text*: *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general, the fault which God finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but fail'd in their main design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reason he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by him as perform'd unto Him, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *First*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our selves, I shall consider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that He would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon our selves and others as are needful and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the Poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely,

II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance thro'out the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest Prayers and Supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fasting and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's Assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an Occasion as this.

First, We should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins and Miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the Publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Ven-

gence of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance should begin with our selves and our own Sins, because Repentance is always designed to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular Persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

1 Kings 8.
37, 38, 39,
40.

And this *Solomon* prescribes as the true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedication of the Temple: *If there be, says he, in the Land famine; if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Cities: Whatever plague, whatever sickness there be; what prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, and spread forth his hands towards this House: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whose heart thou knowest, for thou even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gavest to their Fathers.*

You see here that in case of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation must begin with particular Persons: *What prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular persons must be convinced of their personal Sins and Transgressions, before God will hear the Prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And because we cannot perform this part of confessing and bewailing our own personal Sins, and of testifying our particular Repentance for them, in the publick Congregation, any otherwise than by joyning with them in a general Humiliation and Repentance; therefore we should do well, on the Day before the publick Fast, or at least the Morning before we go to the publick Assembly, to humble our selves before God in our Families, and especially in our Closets; confessing to Him, with great shame and sorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the several Aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of against the Divine Majesty, so far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earnestly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*.

And so likewise, after we return from the Church, we should retire again into our Closets, and there renew our Repentance, with most serious and sincere Resolutions of reforming in all those particulars which we have confessed and repented of. And if we would have our Resolutions to come to any good, we must make them as distinct and particular as we can; and charge it upon our selves, as to such and such Sins, for which we have declared our sorrow and repentance, that we will amend and do better for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortifie these good Resolutions, in the best manner we can by serious consideration and by solemn promises of better obedience, and of a more conscientious Care of our Lives and all our Actions for the future: And then, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we should implore the Assistance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great End of a solemn Fast and Humiliation will be in some good Measure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is by being huddled up and lost in a confused and general Repentance, which, commonly ends together with the publick Assembly, without any real and permanent

permanent Effect upon particular Persons : Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their sins ; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the same Affection for his Sins which he had before, and a secret Resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They had their solemn monthly Fast, in which they made a great shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under them* : But there was no inward change of their minds, no real Reformation of their Lives ; and as soon as ever the publick Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil Course. So God complains of them: *I hearkened, says He, and I heard, but they spake not aright ; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done ? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. They spake not aright, that is, they did not take the right Method for an effectual Repentance : They humbled themselves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community : But all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular ; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true general Repentance : No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done ?* Jer. 8. 6.

And as they had no sense of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them ; but as soon as ever the publick Fasting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the same eager and furious Appetite ; *they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle, that is, without any consideration, or sense of danger.*

Secondly, We should likewise upon this Day, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others ; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation committed by all Ranks and Orders of Men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own ; to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were ready to bring down upon them : *But if ye will not return, says he to that obdurate People, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, or obstinacy ; and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's Flock is carried away captive.* And indeed almost the whole Prophecy of *Jeremy*, and his Book of *Lamentations*, are little else but a perpetual Humiliation and Mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the judgments of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to be coming upon them. Jer. 13. 17.

We read likewise of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*, how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked : *For that righteous man, saith St. Peter, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.*

Holy *David* also, upon all occasions, testifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw committed by others, and was so affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them : *Rivers of tears, says Psal. 119. 36. he, run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy Law : And in the same Psalm, Horror hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked which forsake thy Law : v. 53.*

v. 158. *Law* : And again, *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not thy Word.*

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God and mourn, and in the Name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which they had been guilty of? *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day : To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, upon a solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People? *O my God*, says he, *I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God : For our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the Heavens : Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day ; and for our iniquities have we, our Kings and our Priests, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands, &c.*

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinful Land, upon this solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous Aggravations ; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overspread the Nation, and diffused it self thro' all Ranks and Degrees of Men, *Magistrates, Ministers* and People. I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

1. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the Vices and Immoralities of others, who are far from being Examples of Virtue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of Justice in the Nation, and that Magistrates are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution : As against the profanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the Meditations of another World ; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity which he never fails to take, to steal the good seed, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect : And which is yet worse, by lewd and sinful practices, which are unlawful, at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for which the Land mourns ; and against *Drunkennes*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common, and so impudently committed amongst us : Whether they be Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws ; and it is hard to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, so frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that severity and impartiality which is necessary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin, which calls so loud to Heaven for Vengeance.

And

And all this, notwithstanding the Magistrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution against all these Crimes, so far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cognisance.

2. The Sins of the *Ministers*, who serve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whose blood will be required at their hands, if any of them perish through their fault and neglect. There is no reason to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithful Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conscience, remembering the dreadful Account which they must one Day make to *Him who shall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how grossly do many of us fail of the faithful discharge of the substantial parts of this high Office? wanting a just sense of the inestimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Christ died; taking little or no care to instruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happiness by an exemplary conversation.

Nay too many among us demean themselves so scandalously, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives so directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed Conversations: Hereby exposing them to the Craft of Seducers, and rendring them an easie prey to the *Emissaries* of the Church of Rome, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better shew of a strict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe those Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themselves and their own Doctrines? When all is said, the life and manners of the Preacher are the best eloquence, and have that dint and power of perswasion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Whoso lives as he speaks, does, as it is said of our Blessed Saviour, *Speaks as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: Not as the Scribes*; whose words, notwithstanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, because, as our Saviour tells us of them, *they said, but did not*; their Lives were not answerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Blessed Saviour therefore *spoke as never man spake*, because he liv'd as never man liv'd; so innocent, so useful, so exemplary a life: *He was holy, harmless, and undefil'd: He did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips: He fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good.* This was that which made him so powerful a Preacher of Righteousness; and we must necessarily fall so much short of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our Sermons, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our Lives. Such a Preacher, and such a practice as that of our Blessed Saviour was, is every way fitted to reprove, and persuade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blasphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by those, who, above all others, are most nearly concern'd to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our Religion and Church are beset and endanger'd on every side; by the rude assaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning Arts of seducing Spirits, and by our own intestine Heats and Divisions: And it can never be sufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of Men in a holy Faith, and in the resolution of a good Life, should for want

want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needless Differences about lesser things, have so great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of Men either to downright Infidelity, or to a careless neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

Jer. 5. 30,
31.

May not God justly expostulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the Jews? *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets prophesie falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* When they who are the Pastors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that pass, that the generality of the People sit down contented with the worst state of things, and are become almost indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of these things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

Jer. 13. 20,
21.

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it must begin at the House of God; and they who are the Ministers of Religion must lead on this work, and be more careful and conscientious in the discharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. Else, what shall we say when God shall challenge us, as he once did the Pastors of the Jewish Church, by his Prophet, saying, *Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautiful Flock? What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?*

Isa. 1. 4, 5.

3. The Sins of the People; amongst whom there is almost an universal corruption and depravation of Manners; insomuch that Impiety and Vice seem to have over-spread the face of the Nation; so that we may take up that sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of Israel, and apply it to our selves; that we are *a sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers; that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; and that from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores.*

We may justly stand amaz'd to consider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day; to think how long he hath born with us and *suffered our manners*; our open Profaneness, and Infidelity; our great Immoralities, and gross Hypocrisie; our insolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and sordid ends: And, which is the most melancholy consideration of all the rest, we seem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongst to save us.

And then if we consider further our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation: Our incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God which we have seen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very severe and terrible manner been inflicted upon these Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteousness*: Our insensibleness of the Hand of God, so visible in his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewise whom He hath so signal-ly honour'd in making them the happy Means and Instruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only express'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a most unnatural Conspiracy against Them with the greatest Enemies,

mies, not only to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the Reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law established; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with Ezra, *And now, O our God, what shall we say unto thee after this?* And may not God likewise say to us, as He did more than once to the Jews? *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Ezra 9. 6.

Thirdly, We should likewise upon this Day, earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that he would be entreated by us at last to be pleas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn Days of Fasting and Prayer; and this God expressly enjoins: *Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sanctifie a Fast, call a solemn Assembly; gather the People, sanctifie the Congregation, assemble the Elders, &c. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God?* Joel 2. 15, 16, 17.

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments, God promiseth a gracious answer; for so it immediately follows: *Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.* Vers. 18.

And thus likewise Daniel, when he set his face to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People, and beg of Him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them, *O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City Jerusalem, thy Holy Mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, bear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy Sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.* Dan. 9. 3. Vers. 16, 17, 18, 19.

And thus also should We, upon this Solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which we so righteously have deserv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly expos'd us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our Righteousness, but for his great Mercy; for his own Name's sake, and because we are his People, and are called by his Name, and because his Holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the Prayers of his Servants and their Supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

Fourthly, We should likewise upon this Day, pour out our most earnest Supplications to Almighty God, for the preservation of Their Majesties Sacred Persons, and for the prosperity and establishment of their Government, and for the good Success of Their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since His Majesty, with so many Confederate Princes and States of Europe, is engaged in so necessary an Undertaking for the Common

Common good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of Their respective Rights : We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause, against the common Invader and Oppressor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And that of his infinite Goodness He would be graciously pleased to take the Person of our *Sovereign Lord the King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence : That He would secure his precious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open Violence : That he would give his Angels charge over him, and cover his Head in the Day of Battle, and crown it with Victory over his Enemies, and restore him to us again in safety.

And that he would likewise preserve and direct the *Queen's Majesty* in whose hands the Administration of the Government is at present so happily plac'd : That He would give Her wisdom and Resolution for such a Time as this, and support and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And Lastly, That He would bless them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us ; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

Dan. 4. 27.

Fifthly, Our Fasting and Humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy : And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity* : Hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquillity and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruine of a sinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of Peace towards them : For so he promiseth to the *Jews* upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to Him, which are always accompanied with Charity to the Poor : *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end : Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you : And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

Jer. 29. 11,
12, 13.

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes, who are so ready to every good Work, and such bright and shining Examples in this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors : I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite Mercy and Goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to give and not to receive ; and to be free from Persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted ?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the Poor is a great Security to us in times of evil : So *David* assures us, speaking of the *Righteous or Charitable Man* ; *He shall not, says he, be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he shall be satisfied.*

And so likewise in Times of publick Distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side, would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation hath many times prov'd its best safeguard and shield : *It shall fight for thee, saith the Son of Sirach, speaking of the Charity*

Charity of Alms, *against thine Enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but we of this Nation, by the great Mercy and Goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor, I say, not only to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be said as *Job* doth of the *Leviathan*, *Upon the earth there is not his like: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows, That he is made without fear; but* ^{*Job* 41. 33.} surely the next words are apposite enough, *He beholdeth all high things, and is King of all the children of pride: And yet He that is higher than the highest, even He that sitteth in the Heavens doth laugh at him, for He seeth that his Day is coming.*

To conclude this Particular; If we would have our Prayers ascend up to Heaven, and find acceptance there, our Alms must go along with them: So the *Angel* intimates when he says to *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are gone up for a memorial before God: Thy Prayers and thine Alms; they must go together if we desire that our Prayers should be effectual.* ^{*Acts* 10. 4.} And the Prophet *Isaiab*, speaking of the Fast which God hath chosen, and which is acceptable to Him, makes Charity and Alms a most essential part of it: *Is it not, says he, to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.* ^{*Isa.* 58. 7. 9.}

Sixthly and Lastly, We should Prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. For in this Repentance doth mainly consist: This is the proper fruit and effect of all our Humiliation and good Resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards God, more sober and chaste with regard to our selves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: In a word, more innocent, more useful, and more holy in all manner of conversation.

And without this, all our Fasting and Humiliation, our most earnest Prayers and Supplications will signify nothing: All our Sorrow and Tears will be but as water spilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own Souls, or to preserve this untoward Generation, this crooked and perverse Nation, from ruin and destruction. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the only way to appease and reconcile Him to a sinful People: *If my People which is called by my Name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their Land.* ^{*2 Chron.* 7. 14.}

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, to turn us from our wicked ways, God would then turn away his anger from us; and, as he promised to the *Jews* by the Prophet *Zachary*, He would turn these our monthly Fasts into joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts; as he hath in a great measure already done, *Blessed be his great and glorious Name.* ^{*Zech.* 8. 19.}

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God should deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against Him without fear

all the days of our Lives? To what Purpose should the Providence of God take so much care to preserve our Religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it serves most of us only to talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk against it; to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can we say, why the Kingdom of God should not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perswaded to practice, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worst: So Ezek. 33. 31. God tells the *Prophet* concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they sit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very misbecoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the Great and glorious *Majesty of Heaven and Earth*, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steady attention, without wandering, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God*, in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day; and to turn to Him that hath smitten us, lest we provoke him to punish us yet seven times more, and after that seven times more for our sins, and for our impenitency in them, till at last He make our plagues wonderful.

To conclude; Let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that there were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee, O Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XL.

*That God is the only Happiness of Man.*Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*,*March the 20th. 1691.*

P S A L M LXXIII. 25.

Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.

THE Design of this *Psalm* is to vindicate the Goodness and Justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous state of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain Truth that God is good to good men: *Of a truth God is good to* Ver. 1.
Israel, to such as are of a clean heart.

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptation to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good men exposed to great calamities in this life; as if God either neglected humane affairs, or had a greater kindness for the Workers of Iniquity, than for Pious and Good Men: *As for me, my foot had well* Ver. 2.
nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

This, he says, was a very great stumbling block to good men, and tempted them to doubt of the Providence of God: *Therefore his People return* Ver. 10.
thither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; and they say, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High? This Sentence is somewhat obscurely rendred in our *Translation*, so as to make the sense of it difficult; which is plainly this: *Therefore his People return thither*; that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatness of their affliction, and in the bitterness of their soul, to question God's knowledge and care of humane affairs.

O O O 2

Behold,

Ver. 12. Behold, say they, *these are the ungodly, and yet they are the prosperous in the world, they increase in riches*: To what purpose then is it for any man to be Religious and Virtuous? Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency: In vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, since so little good comes of it; nay, so far from that, that I have been in continual trouble and affliction: *All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

Ver. 13. Such thoughts as these often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and disquiet: But he presently corrects himself: *If I say I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy Children*; that is, I should go against the sense of all pious and good men, who have always believed the Providence of God notwithstanding this Objection: Which at last he tells us he had raised on purpose to try if he could find the solution of it:

Ver. 14. *I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes*: And then he resolves all into the unsearchable Wisdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully understood from first to last, we should see good reason to be satisfied with the equity of it: *When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then shall I understand the end of these men: How thou didst set them in slippery places, &c.*

Ver. 15, 16. This satisfied him, that whenever the secret design of God's Providence should be unfolded, whether in this World or the other, how strange and cross soever things might seem to be at present, yet in the issue and conclusion it would appear, that neither are bad Men so happy, nor good Men so miserable, as at present they may seem to be.

Ver. 17. So that upon a full debate of this matter, the Psalmist concludes, that these Objections against Providence do spring from our ignorance, and short and imperfect view of things; whereas if we saw the whole design from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reasonable and regular. *Thus my heart was grieved; so foolish was I and ignorant, and as a Beast before thee.* And in regard to himself, he tells us, that he saw great reason to acknowledge God's tender care over him in particular, and that he could find no security or comfort for himself, but in God alone: *Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by thy right hand: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory*; as if he had said, I am sensible of thy constant presence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance and direction, not doubting but that my present troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious issue.

Ver. 18. And at last he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty consolation which he found in the firm belief of the Being and Providence of God, as the great stay and support of his Soul in the worst condition that could befall him; in the words of the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* If a man were to chuse a happiness for himself, and were to ransack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his search and enquiry he would at last fix upon God as the chief happiness of man, and the true and only rest and center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the Text, *That nothing in the world but God can make man happy: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

Ver. 19. That Man of himself is not sufficient for his own happiness, is evident upon many accounts: Because he is liable to so many evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent nor remedy: He is full of wants which he can't supply; compassed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redress: He is obnoxious to dangers which he must always fear, because he can never sufficiently provide against them.

Consider

Consider Man by himself, and from under the conduct and protection of a superiour and more powerful Being, and he is in a most disconsolate and forlorn condition : Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be disappointed of every thing that he hopes for : He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the justest cause of his grief is that he cannot help it ; for if he could, instead of grieving for it, he would help it : He cannot refrain from desiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, because they are out of his power ; and it troubles him both that they are so, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

Thus man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain ; courting happiness in a thousand shapes, and the faster he follows it, the swifter it flies from him. Almost every thing promiseth happiness to us at a distance, such a step of Honour, such a pitch of Estate, such a Fortune or Match for a Child : But when we come nearer to it, either we fall short of it, or it falls short of our expectation ; and it is hard to say which of these is the greatest disappointment. Our hopes are usually bigger than enjoyment can satisfy, and an evil long fear'd, besides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troublesome than the evil it self when it comes.

In a word, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. He comes into the World naked and unarm'd, and from himself more destitute of the natural means of his security and support than any other Creature whatsoever, as it were on purpose to shew that he is more peculiarly the care of a superiour Providence : And as man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity ; so God in great Wisdom hath so order'd things, that none of the other Creatures should have so much need of Him, and so much reason to acknowledge their necessary dependance upon him. So that the words of *David* are the very sense and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependance upon the Providence of God than other Creatures : *Thou art he,* says *David* there to God, *that tookest me out of the womb, thou madest me to hope,* or *thou didst keep me in safety, when I was upon my mother's breasts : I was cast upon thee from the womb, that art my God from my mother's belly : Be not far from me, for trouble is near : Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far from any of us : For in him we live, and move, and have our being.* Psal. 22. 9,
10, 11.

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many mischiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives ; and, without the Providence of God, continually insecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it self : So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arrived at that state, and how we have continued in it so long, considering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us : That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when so many hands have been lifted up against us, and so many strokes levell'd at us, we have escaped so free, and with so few marks and scars upon us : That when we are besieged with so many dangers, and so many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do so many ways lie open, we should yet hold out *twenty, forty, sixty* years, and some of us perhaps longer, and do still stand at the mark untouch'd, at least not dangerously wounded by any of them : And considering likewise this fearful and wonderful frame of a humane Body, this infinitely complicated Engine ; in which, to the due performance of the several functions and offices of life, so many strings and springs, so many receptacles and channels are necessary, and all in their right

right frame and order ; and in which, besides the infinite imperceptible and secret ways of mortality, there are so many sluices and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, tho' we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day since we were born : I say, considering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of humane Life, which is set in so slippery a place, that we still continue in the land of the living, we cannot ascribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our soul in life, and suffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the same merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilst we continue in life we have any comfortable possession and enjoyment of our selves and of that which makes us Men, I mean our Reason and Understanding : That our Imagination is not let loose upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears : That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind : That every day we do not fall into frenzy and distraction, which next to wickedness and vice is the sorest calamity, and saddest disguise of humane Nature : I say, next to wickedness and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madness not from misfortune but from choice ; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and necessary causes, such as are in a great measure out of our power ; so that we are perpetually liable to it, from any secret and sudden disorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Disease, or the vehement transport of any Passion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder so many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another ? like the calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had set about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be secure of no sort, no degree of happiness in this World ; no not for one moment : And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this present life : For God and another World stand and fall together : Without *Him* there can be no Life after this, and if our hopes of happiness were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings in this lower World would certainly be the most miserable.

I cannot say that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World ; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to support and comfort him against the fear of that danger. For the Nature of Man, consider'd by it self, is plainly insufficient for its own happiness ; so that we must necessarily look abroad, and seek for it somewhere else : And who can shew us that good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of humane Nature ? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following Properties,

First, It must be an All-sufficient good.

Secondly, It must be perfect Goodness.

Thirdly, It must be firm and unchangeable in it self.

Fourthly, It must be such a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.

Fifthly, It must be eternal.

Sixthly, It must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life.

Lastly,

Lastly, It must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquility to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy : And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supreme Good ; as I shall endeavour in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew ; and consequently, *That God is the only happiness of Man.*

First, God is an All-sufficient Good. And this does import *two* things ; Wisdom to contrive our happiness, and Power to effect it ; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wise* to design and contrive our happiness ; because he knows what Happiness is, and how to frame us so as to be capable of the happiness he designs for us ; and how to order and dispose all other things so, as that they shall be no hinderance and impediment to it.

He perfectly understands all the possibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to supply them ; all our hopes and desires, and how to satisfy them : He foresees all the dangers and evils which threatens us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit ; or if he permit them to come, how to support us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the last issue and result of things.

His Wisdom cannot be surprized by any accident which he did not foresee, and which he is not sufficiently provided against. The Wisdom of men is but short and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and mistakes : In many cases men know not what is safest and best for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce most to their happiness : Nay it often happens that those very means which the wisest men chuse for their security do prove the occasions of their ruine, and they are thrown down by those very ways whereby they thought to raise and establish themselves.

Especially if God breath upon the Counsels of men, how are their designs blasted ? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepest contrivances, and *snared in the work of their own hands* ? When *it is of the Lord*, the wisdom of the greatest *Politicians* is turned into foolishness : For *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

But the Divine Wisdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby secur'd against all possibility of error and mistake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the use and application of them to any of his purposes : So that none of his designs of love and mercy to the Sons of Men can miscarry for want of good contrivance, or wise conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wise* to contrive our happiness, so is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obstacles and impediments of it. We may understand many times what would conduce to our happiness, but may not be able to compass it ; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency : Many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God : Many things are impossible with us, but *with God all things are possible.* For He is the Fountain and Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly subject and subordinate : He can do all things at once, and in an instant, and with the greatest ease ; and no created Power can put any difficulty in his way,

way, much less make any effectual resistance ; because Omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our side, who can be against us ? We may safely *commit our souls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power.* Though all Creatures should fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-sufficiency for our supply ; and may say with the Prophet, *Though the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither Fruit be in the Vine ; though the labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no meat ; though the Flock should be cut off from the Fold, and there should be no Herd in the Stalls ; yet would I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

- II. Secondly, As God is an All-sufficient Good, so He is perfect Goodness. He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his Power and Wisdom for our Good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being so but our selves. Such is his goodness, that *he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth :* And when we have provoked him by our sins, *he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance :* For *he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* So that if any of us be miserable, it is our own choice ; if we perish, our destruction is of our selves : For as the *Wiseman*, in one of the *Apocryphal Books*, says excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living : But men seek death in the error of their life, and pull destruction upon themselves, with the works of their own hands.*

So great is the goodness of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is necessary to our happiness. He design'd it for us at first, and to that end he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful transgression and disobedience of the first Parents of Mankind, and were miserably bruised and maimed by their fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to restore us to a new capacity of happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our nature, and in our stead ; and thereby to become a *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, and the Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him :* And he hath likewise promised to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, as the necessary conditions of our eternal Salvation.

- III. Thirdly, God is also a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithstanding his infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, we might be miserable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happiness which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greatest aggravations of misery is to fall from happiness, to have been once happy and afterwards to cease to be so : And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cause of our happiness could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwise than powerful, and wise, and good, all our hopes of happiness would be shaken, and would fall to the ground. But the Divine Nature is not subject to any change : As he is *the Father of Lights, and the Author of every good and perfect gift, so with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reason, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, God is such a good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; because we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who shall separate us, saith the Apostle, from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? We may be stripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all these can separate us from God: I am perswaded, as the Apostle goes on with great triumph, that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Nor any other Creature: Here is a sufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and that is Sin, which is none of God's Creatures, but our own: This indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.*

IV.

Rom. 8. 35.

Ver. 38, 39.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of Him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder: the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best friends, and banish'd from all our acquaintance; but men can send us no whither from the presence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermost parts of the Earth.

Fifthly, God is an eternal God: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless duration, must have a happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us happy, because we shall abide and remain after it; When a very few years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from them, *But God is from everlasting to everlasting: He is the same, and his years fail not: Therefore well might David fix his happiness upon God alone, and say, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee: When my heart faileth, and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

V.

Sixthly, God is able to support and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and so long as that remains unwounded, *the spirit of a man can bear his infirmities.* God is intimate to our Souls, and hath secret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bitterest afflictions and sharpest sufferings: He can enable us by his Grace to possess our souls in patience, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can give us peace and joy in believing: When we are persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, He can give us that ravishing sight of the Glories of another World, that stedfast assurance of a future Blessedness, as shall quite extinguish all sense of present sufferings: How did many of the primitive Christian Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, and under the very pangs of death rejoice in the hope of the glory of God?

VI.

P p p

There

There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, and of bodily pains and sufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to trust to but *Him* only: And in the greatest Evils that can befall us in this life, He is a sure refuge and sanctuary; and to repeat the words of the *Psalmist* after the *Text*, *When our heart fails, and our strength fails, God is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.*

Now what would any of us do in such a Case, if it were not for God? Humane nature is liable to desperate straits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition, as to be destitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God they would not know which way to turn themselves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable considerations under their present anguish.

All men naturally resort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the most Profane and Atheistical, when they are destitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleasure in fools*; in those who neglect and despise him in their prosperity, though they owe that also entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but in their affliction they will seek him early: Then they will cry, *Lord, Lord*; but he will say to them in that day, *Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.*

Here will be the great unhappiness of such persons, that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: And at the same time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for mercy and forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it: Then, those terrible threatnings of God's Word will come to their minds; *Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices: The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* To which I will add that terrible Passage in the Prophet, concerning the perverse and obstinate Jews, *They are a People of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* And men are miserable Creatures indeed, when God their Maker doth abandon them, and hath so far hardened his heart against them, that he can have no pity and compassion for them.

Seventhly and Lastly, Which is consequent upon all the rest, God is such a Good as can give perfect rest and tranquility to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himself so, whatever cause he may have to think so. Now what in reason can give us disquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the best; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been said of Him: Why should not our minds be

Prov. i. 24.
25, &c.

Isa. 27. 11.

in perfect repose, when we are secure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us so, if we be not wanting to our selves, and by our wilful obstinacy and rebellion against him, do not oppose and frustrate this design.

If a considerate Man were permitted to his own choice, to wish the greatest good to himself that he could possibly devise; after he had searched Heaven and Earth, the result of all his wishes would be that there were just such a Being as we must necessarily conceive God to be: Nor would he chuse any other Friend or Benefactor; any other Protector for himself or Governor for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his enquiry he would come to the Psalmist's Conclusion here in the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to seek for happiness elsewhere, but this proceeds from want of due consideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly cast up and adjusted, we shall at last settle in David's resolution of that great Question, *What is the chief Good of Man?* There be many, Psal. 4. 6, 7, 8. says he, *that say, Who will shew us any good?* That is, Men are generally inquisitive after happiness, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: Most men place it in the present enjoyments of this World, but David for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully convinc'd that the happiness of Man does consist: *There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increased.* The great joy of the men of this World is in a plentiful Harvest, and the abundance of the good things of 'this life: But David had found that which gave more joy and gladness to his heart, the favour of God and the *light of his countenance*: This gave perfect rest and tranquility to his mind, so that he needed not to enquire any further: For so it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and rest; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety*: The Hebrew word signifies confidence or security: Here, and no where else, his mind found rest, and was in perfect ease and security.

I shall now only make two or three Inferences from this Discourse, and so conclude.

First, This plainly shews us the great unreasonableness and folly of Atheism, which would banish the belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is most impious in respect of God, so is most malicious to men; because it strikes at the very foundation of our happiness, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no God, Man would evidently be the most unhappy of all other Beings here below; because his unhappiness would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which distinguishes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reason and Understanding: And he would be so much more miserable than the Beasts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger prospect of future evils; a quicker apprehension, and a deeper and more lasting resentment of them.

So that if any man could see reason to stagger his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am sure there is infinite reason to the contrary; yet the belief of these things is so much for the interest, and comfort, and happiness of Mankind, that a Wise man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle so favourable to his quiet, and that does so exactly answer all the natural desires and hopes and fears of Men, and is so equally calculated both for our comfort in this World, and for our happiness in the other: For when a man's

thoughts have ranged and wandred as far as they can, his mind can find no rest, no probable foundation of happiness but God only; no other reasonable, no nor tolerable *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things for a Wise man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmly believed and truly lived up to by an answerable practice, was ever able to support the generality of Mankind, and to minister true consolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not something real in the Principles of Religion, it is impossible that they should have so remarkable and so regular an effect to support our minds in every condition, upon so great a number of persons of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant places, and in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us: I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reason be ascribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform cause proportionable to so great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost evidence that any thing is capable of and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavils and objections against it; but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other interest but to find out Truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it: If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any virtue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an impossibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this; That he would offer some other *Principles*; that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do: And till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded, and ought not to be disturbed and put out of Possession. And this, I think puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

2. *Secondly*, From what hath been said, in the foregoing Discourse, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our trust and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to address all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need*. But now, according to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of Rome, the *Psalmist* here puts a very odd and strange Question, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they must give a quite different answer from what the *Psalmist* plainly intended; namely, that God was the sole Object of his hope and trust, and that upon Him alone he relied as his only comfort and happiness: But to this Assertion of the *Psalmist* the Church of Rome can by no means agree: They understand this matter much better than the *Psalmist* did; namely, that besides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repose great trust and confidence, and to whom also we are to address solemn Prayers

Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our Sins, for the increase of our Graces, and for eternal Life : That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occasions, against all sorts of dangers and diseases, for all Graces and Virtues, and, in a word, for all temporal, spiritual, and eternal Blessings, to whom we may apply our selves, without troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is *God blessed for evermore*, by presuming upon every occasion to make our immediate Addresses to him : For as they would make us believe, tho' *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the blessed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not only intercede with God for us for all sorts of Blessings, but we may make direct and immediate Addresses to them to bestow these Blessings upon us : For so they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from several of their *Prayers* in their most publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by these direct and immediate Addresses to Angels and Saints to bestow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleased to intercede with God for these Blessings to be bestowed upon them by their Mediation : But if they mean no more, why do they say more than they mean ? Why do they use such expressions as to the common sense and understanding of Mankind do signifie a great deal more than they say they mean ; such expressions, as they themselves do acknowledge, if they be understood according to the most obvious sense of the words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry ? Especially when they know, that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account ; and since to clear themselves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they justly lie under the suspicion of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this matter to be true, and that by these expressions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but their solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation : Yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the Office of the only Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus : But let them not deceive themselves, God is not mocked : The Lord our God is a jealous God, and He will not give his Glory to another.

I have not yet instanced in the grossest part of their *Superstition*, not to say down-right Idolatry, in this kind ; I mean, in their extravagant Worship of the blessed Virgin and Mother of our Lord ; whom they blasphemously call the Queen of Heaven ; and whom, by a new style, unknown to the Scriptures and Primitive Antiquity, they think to dignifie with the modish Title of our Lady ; as if that could be any addition of honour to Her, whom the Angel declared to be blessed among Women : Who, if she knew any thing of the follies of Her Worshipers here below, with what disdain and indignation, do we think She bears those infinite Prayers that are made to Her, and that Sacrilegious Worship which is given Her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion ; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Christ ? As if there were none in Heaven but She, nor anything upon Earth to be worshipped in comparison of Her Image.

Nay, so far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the Reformation given a check to it, God only knows : So far, I say, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous Book of their Devotions, call'd Our Lady's Psalter, not only to apply to Her

Her some part of this *Psalms*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to Israel, to them that worship his Blessed Mother* ? But they have likewise profanely *burlesqued*, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole *Book of Psalms*, applying to Her almost the highest things that are there said concerning God and our *Blessed Saviour*. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth, and be ye horribly astonished*, to see the best and wisest Religion in the World transform'd into Superstition and Folly; and to see the most learned Persons in that Communion set themselves in good earnest to justify all these follies and absurdities by a grave and groundless pretence to *Infallibility*.

3.

Psal. 119.

Thirdly and Lastly, This shews us how necessary the favour of God is to every man's happiness: And there is but one way to gain his friendship and favour, by becoming holy and good as He is: Then may we rejoice and glory in God, as the *Psalmist* here does, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee*. A wicked Man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great reason to do so: *For he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity*. When by sin we depart from God, we forsake our own happiness: *Salvation is far from the wicked*, says *David*. And again, a little after the *Text*, *They that are far from thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw near to God*. Now by Holiness and Goodness we draw near to Him, who alone can make us happy.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind there should be a God, because we cannot possibly be happy without Him: But then it is no man's Interest to be wicked, because thereby we make Him our Enemy in whose favour is life, and upon whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our Happiness, we must be sure to make him our Friend; and then we may promise to our selves all those advantages which the Friendship of so great and powerful a Patron can give us: And there is but one way to establish a firm Friendship between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my friends*, saith our blessed Lord, *if ye do whatsoever I command you: This is the love of God*, saith St. John, *that we keep his commandments*: And to love God is the way to be made partakers of those glorious things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: *Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*: Which God of his infinite Goodness grant we may all at last be made partakers of, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XLI.

*A Thanksgiving-Sermon for the late Victory at Sea.*Preached before the King and Queen at
WHITEHALL, October the 27th 1692.

J E R. IX. 23, 24.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.



These words are a message from God sent by his Prophet to the People of the Jews, who trusted in their own *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*, for their safety and preservation from that Destruction which, in the former part of this Chapter, God had threatn'd to bring upon them by the King of Babylon. To take them off from this vain confidence is this Message sent to them, *Thus saith the Lord,*

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

In the handling of these Words, I shall abstract from the particular Occasion of them, and only consider the general Truth contained in them: Which I shall do under these two Heads.

First,

First, What we are not to glory in : Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might ; let not the rich man glory in his riches.

Secondly, What it is that is matter of true glory : But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

I. *I. What we are not to glory in.* The Text instanceth in three things which are the great Idols of Mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themselves and to place their confidence, namely, *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*. I shall consider these severally, and shew how little reason there is to glory in any of them.

1. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* This may comprehend both humane Knowledge, and likewise Prudence in the management of Affairs. We will suppose both these to be intended here by the name of *Wisdom*, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, that is, neither in the largeness and compass of his Knowledge and Understanding, nor in his Skill and Dexterity in the contrivance and conduct of humane Affairs ; and that for these two reasons.

1. *First*, Because the highest pitch of humane Knowledge and Wisdom is very imperfect.

Secondly, Because when Knowledge and Wisdom are with much difficulty in any competent measure attained, how easily are they lost ?

First, The highest pitch of humane knowledge and wisdom is very imperfect. Our Ignorance doth vastly exceed our Knowledge at the best. Wisdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attain'd, but perfection in it utterly to be despair'd of. Where is there to be found so strong and sound a Head, as hath no soft place : so perfect, so clear an Understanding as hath no flaw, no dark Water in it ? How hard a matter is it to be truly wise ? And yet there are so many Pretenders to Wisdom as would almost tempt a man to think that nothing is easier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal distribution of other things, as of health and strength, of power and riches : But if we will trust the judgment of most men concerning themselves, nothing is more equally shar'd among Mankind than a good degree of Wisdom and Understanding. Many will grant others to be superiour to them in other gifts of Nature, as in bodily strength and stature ; and in the Gifts of Fortune, as in Riches and Honour ; because the difference between one man and another in these qualities is many times so gross and palpable, that no body hath the face to deny it : But very few in comparison, unless it be in mere complement and civility, will yield others to be wiser than themselves ; and yet the difference in this also is for the most part very visible to every body but themselves.

So that true Wisdom is a thing very extraordinary. Happy are they that have it : And next to them, not those many that think they have it, but those few that are sensible of their own defects and imperfections, and know that they have it not.

And among all the kinds of Wisdom none is more nice and difficult, and meets with more frequent disappointments, than that which men are most apt to pride themselves in, I mean *Political* wisdom and prudence ; because it depends upon so many contingent Causes, any one of which failing the best laid design breaks and falls in pieces : It depends upon the uncertain wills and

and fickle humours, the mistaken and mutable interests of men, which are perpetually shifting from one point to another, so that no body knows where to find them : Besides an unaccountable mixture of that which the *Heathen* call'd *Fortune*, but we *Christians* by its true name, the *Providence* of God ; which does frequently interpose in humane Affairs, and loves to confound the wisdom of the wise, and to turn their counsels into foolishness.

Of this we have a most remarkable Example in *Achitophel*, of whose wisdom the *Scripture* gives this extraordinary Testimony, That the counsel which he counselled in those days was as if one had enquired at the Oracle of God : Such was all the counsel of *Achitophel* both with *David* and with *Abfalom*. It seems he gave very good counsel also to *Abfalom*, and because he would not follow it was discontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himself : And now who would pride himself in being so very wise as to be able to give the best counsel in the world, and yet so very weak as to make away himself, because he to whom it was given was not wise enough to take it ?

The like miscarriages often happen in point of Military Skill and prudence. A great *Prince* or *General* is sometimes so very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a Battle ; and then at another time, and perhaps in another Element, so rash and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten : As if the two Elements made the difference ; and caution were great wisdom at Land, and confidence and presumption great prudence at Sea. But the true reason of these things lies much deeper, in the secret Providence of Almighty God, who when he pleases can so govern and over-rule both the understandings and the wills of men, as shall best serve his own wise purpose and design.

And as the highest pitch of humane Wisdom is very imperfect in it self, so is it much more so in comparison with the Divine knowledge and wisdom : Compar'd with this it is mere folly, and less than the understanding and wisdom of a child to that of the wisest man. The foolishness of God, says St. Paul, *1 Cor. 1. 23.* is wiser than men, that is, the least grain of Divine wisdom is infinitely beyond all the wisdom of men : But in opposition to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of men is less than nothing and vanity. Let men design things never so prudently, and make them never so sure, even to the *Popish* and *French* degree of infallibility ; let them reckon upon it as a Blow that cannot fail : Yet after all, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure ; for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.

And now we may ask the Question which *Job* does, *Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* And we must answer it as he does, *It is not to be found in the land of the living :* unless it be that one infallible Point of Wisdom to which God directs every man, and of which every man is capable, viz. Religion and the Fear of God, *Unto man he said, Behold ! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.* *Job 28. 12.* Chap. 28. 12. *Job 28. 23.*

Secondly, When knowledge and wisdom are with great difficulty in any competent measure attain'd, how easily are they lost ? By a disease, by a blow upon the head ; by a sudden and violent passion, which may disorder the strongest Brain, and confound the clearest Understanding in a moment : Nay even the excess of knowledge and wisdom, especially if attended with pride, as too often it is, is very dangerous, and does many times border upon distraction and run into madness : Like an *Athletick* constitution and perfect state of health, which is observ'd by *Physicians* to verge upon some dangerous Disease, and to be a fore-runner of it.

And when a man's Understanding is once craz'd and shatter'd, how are the finest notions and thoughts of the wisest man blunder'd and broken, perplex'd

and entangled? like a puzzled lump of filk, so that the man cannot draw out a thought to any length, but is forc'd to break it off and to begin at another end. Upon all which and many more accounts, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, which is so very imperfect; so hard to be attain'd, and yet so easie to be lost.

2. *Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.* Which whether it be meant of natural strength of body, or of military force and power, how weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foil'd by an unequal strength?

If we understand it of the natural strength of men's bodies, how little reason is there to glory in that, in which so many of the Creatures below us do by so many degrees excel us? In that, which may so many ways be lost; by sickness, by a maim, and by many other external Accidents; and which however will decay of it self, and by Age sink into infirmity and weakness.

And how little reason is there to glory in that, which is so frequently foil'd by an unequal strength? of which *Goliath* is a famous instance. When he defied the Host of *Israel*, and would needs have the matter decided by single Combat, God inspired *David* to accept the Challenge; who tho' he was no wise comparable to him in strength, and would have been nothing in his hands in close fight, yet God directed him to assail him at a distance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a stone out of a sling, which struck the Giant in the forehead, and brought his unweildy bulk down to the Earth.

Or if by *might* we understand military force and power, how little likewise is that to be gloried in? considering the uncertain events of War, and how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpose to cast the Victory on the unlikely side. It is *Solomon's* observation, that such are the interpositions of Divine Providence in humane Affairs, that the Event of things is many times not at all answerable to the power and probability of second Causes: *I returned*, says he, *and saw under the Sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.*

Ecclef. 9. 11.

And one way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpose to decide the Events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seasons and Weather in favour of one side: As by sending great Snows, or violent Rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great Design: By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the Conjunction of a powerful Fleet: And by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the Advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well-laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late signal Deliverances and Victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the Book of *Job*: Which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this Book to be incomparably the most ancient of all other, and much elder than *Moses*: And yet it is written with as lively a sense of the Providence of God, and as noble Figures and Flights of Eloquence as perhaps any Book extant in the World. The Passage I mean is, where God to convince *Job* of his ignorance in the secrets of Nature and Providence poseth him with many hard Questions, and with this amongst the rest, *Hast thou entred into the treasures of the Snow? hast thou seen the treasures of the Hail, which I have reserv'd against the time of trouble, against the Day of Battle and War?* The meaning of which is, that the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to determine the Events of War, by governing the Seasons and the Weather, and by making the Snows and Rains, the Winds and Storms to fulfil his Word and to execute his Pleasure.

Job 38. 22,
23.

Of

Of this we have a remarkable Instance in the defeat of *Sisera's* mighty Army ; against whom, in the Song of *Deborah*, the Stars are said to have fought in their courses : The expression is Poetical, but the plain meaning of it is, that by mighty and sudden Rains, which the common Opinion did ascribe to a special influence of the Planets, the River of *Kishon*, near which *Sisera's* Army lay, was so raised and swoln as to drown the greatest part of that huge Host. For so *Deborah* explains the fighting of the Stars in their courses against *Sisera* : They fought, says she, from Heaven, the Stars in their courses fought against *Sisera*, the River of *Kishon* swept them away : As if the Stars, which were supposed by their influence to have caused those sudden and extraordinary Rains, had set themselves in Battle array against *Sisera* and his Army.

Therefore, let not the mighty man glory in his might, which is so small in it self, but in opposition to God is weakness and nothing. The weakness of God, says St. Paul, is stronger than men. All Power to do mischief is but impotence, and therefore no matter of boasting : Why boastest thou thy self, thou Tyrant, that thou art able to do mischief? the goodness of God endureth continually : The goodness of God is too hard for the pride and malice of man, and will last and hold out when that has tir'd and spent it self. Psal. 52. 1.

Thirdly, Let not the rich man glory in his riches. In these, men are apt to pride themselves : even the meanest and poorest spirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good store of that together, how will they swell and strut? as if because they are rich and increased in goods they wanted nothing.

But we may do well to consider, that Riches are things without us ; not the real Excellencies of our Nature, but the accidental Ornaments of our Fortune. If they descend upon us, they are the Privilege of our Birth, not the effect of our Wisdom and Industry ; and those things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own : And if they be the fruit of our own prudent industry, that is no such matter of glorying ; because men of much slower understandings do commonly out-do others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low design of being rich.

At the best Riches are uncertain. Charge them, says St. Paul, that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches : Men have little reason to pride themselves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not : So the wise man speaks of Riches, Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards Heaven : He expresses it in such a manner, as if a rich man sat brooding over an Estate till it was fledg'd and had gotten it self wings to fly away. Prov. 23. 5.

But that which is the most stinging consideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good Estate ; so that instead of being the means of our happiness, it may prove the occasion of our ruin : So the same Wise man observes, There is a sore evil which I have seen under the Sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general Pardon, both as to Life and Estate, for no other visible reason but his vast and overgrown Fortune : So Solomon observes to us again, Such are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of the owners thereof. And why should any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cause of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been prosecuted against a man of a middle Fortune. For these reasons, and a great many more, Let not the rich man glory in his riches. Eccles. 5. 13. Prov. 1. 18.

II.

II. I proceed to consider, *What it is that is matter of true glory. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

That he understandeth and knoweth me: Here are two words used to express the thing more fully, *understanding* and *knowledge*; which seem not only to import right apprehensions of the Being, and Providence, and Perfections of God; but likewise a lively sense of these things, and affections suitable to these apprehensions.

That he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that is, the Creator and the Sovereign Governour of the World.

Which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the Earth.

The best Knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the Knowledge of the Divine Nature and Perfections: especially of those which are most proper for our imitation; and such are those mention'd in the Text, *loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness*; which we may distinguish thus: *Loving-kindness* comprehends God's milder Attributes, his *Goodness, and Mercy, and Patience*: *Judgment* signifies his severer dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his People, or in the remarkable Punishment of great Offenders for example and warning to others: *Righteousness* seems to be a word of a larger signification, and to denote that universal Rectitude of the Divine Nature which appears in all the Administrations of his Providence here below; for the Text speaks of the Exercise of these Perfections in this World: *which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

Several of the Perfections of the Divine Nature are incommunicable to a Creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be proposed to us for a Pattern; as *self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency*; the *eternity*, and the *immensity* of the Divine Being: To be the *original Cause* of all other things, and the *Sovereign Governour* of the whole World: For God only is sufficient for that; and to be a Match for all the World, a *nec pluribus impar*, is not a Motto fit for a mortal man. A Creature may swell with pride till it burst, before it can stretch it self to this pitch of Power and Greatness: It is an insufferable Presumption, and a sottish Ignorance of the necessary Bounds and Limits of our Being, to think to resemble God in these Perfections: This was the Ambition of *Lucifer*, to *ascend into Heaven*, and to *be like the most High*.

In our imitation of God we must still keep within the station of Creatures; not affecting an *independency* and *sovereignty* like God, and to be *omnipotent* as he is: *Hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?* as God himself argues with *Job*.

Job 40. 9.

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. God takes pleasure to exercise these Perfections himself, and to see them imitated by us; and the imitation of these Divine Perfections is our perfection and glory; in comparison of which all humane *wisdom, and power, and riches*, are so far from being matter of glory, that they are very despicable and pitiful things: Knowledge and Skill to devise mischief, and power to effect it, are the true Nature and Character of the Devil and his Angels; those apostate and accursed Spirits who in temper and disposition are most contrary to God, who is the Rule and Pattern of all perfection.

I shall only make two *Observations* or *Inferences* from what hath been said, and then apply the whole Discourse to the great Occasion of this Day. And they are these.

Fir

First, That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, That the Nature of God is the true *Idea* and Pattern of Perfection and Happiness.

First, *That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature*: Upon those more especially which to us are most easie and intelligible: such as are those mentioned in the *Text*. And this makes the Knowledge of God, and of these Perfections, to be so useful and so valuable: Because all Religion is founded in right Notions of God, and of his Perfections: Insomuch that Divine Revelation it self does suppose these for its foundation, and can signifie nothing to us unless these be first known and believed: For unless we be first firmly perswaded of the Providence of God, and of his particular care of Mankind, why should we suppose that he makes any Revelation of his Will to us? Unless it be first naturally known that God is a God of Truth, what ground is there for the belief of his Word? So that the Principles of *Natural Religion* are the foundation of that which is reveal'd: And therefore nothing can in Reason be admitted to be a Revelation from God, which does plainly contradict his essential Perfections.

Upon this *Principle*, a great many *Doctrines* are without more ado to be rejected, because they do plainly and at first sight contradict the Divine Nature and Perfections. I will give a few *Instances*, instead of many that might be given.

In virtue of this *Principle* I cannot believe, upon the pretended Authority or Infallibility of any Person or Church, that Force is a fit Argument to produce Faith: No man shall ever perswade me, no not the Bishop of *Meaux* with all his Eloquence, that Prisons and Tortures, Dragoons and the Gallies, are proper means to convince the Understanding, and either *Christian* or *Humane* Methods of converting men to the true Religion.

For the same Reason I cannot believe, that God would not have men to understand their publick Prayers, nor the Lessons of Scripture which are read to them: Because a Lesson is something that is to be learnt, and therefore a Lesson that is not to be understood is nonsense; for if it be not understood how can it be learnt?

As little can I believe, that God who caused the *Holy Scriptures* to be written for the Instruction of Mankind, did ever intend that they should be lock'd up and concealed from the People in an unknown Tongue.

Least of all can I believe that *Doctrine* of the Council of *Trent*, That the saving Efficacy of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the intention of the Priest that administers them: Which is to say, that tho' the People believe and live never so well, yet they may be damn'd by shoals, and whole Parishes together, at the pleasure of the Priest: And this for no other reason, but because the Priest is so cross and so cruel that he will not intend to save them.

Now can any man believe this, that hath any tolerable Notion either of the Goodness or Justice of God? May we not appeal to God in this, as *Abraham* did in another Case? *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do after this manner: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Much more, to destroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent People should lye at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverse Priest, to be sav'd or damn'd by him as he thinks fit, *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* For, to drive the argument to the head, if this be to do right there is no possibility of doing wrong.

Thus in things which are more obscure we should govern all our Reasonings concerning God and Religion by that which is clear and unquestionable, and should

should with *Moses* lay down this for a certain Principle, *All his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He* : And say with *St. Paul*, *Is there then unrighteousness with God ? God forbid.* And again, *We know that the Judgment of God is according to truth.*

2ly, The other Inference is this, *That the Nature of God is the true Idea and Pattern of Perfection and Happiness* : And therefore nothing but our own conformity to it can make us happy : And for this reason, to understand and know God is our great excellency and glory, because it is necessary to our imitation of *Him* who is the best and happiest Being. And so far as we are from resembling God, so far are we distant from Happiness and the true temper of the Blessed. For Goodness is an essential ingredient of Happiness ; and as without Goodness there can be no true Majesty and Greatness, so neither any true Felicity and Blessedness.

Now Goodness is a generous disposition of mind to diffuse and communicate it self by making others to partake of our Happiness, in such degrees as they are capable : For no Being is so happy as it might be, that hath not the power and the pleasure to make others happy : This surely is the highest pleasure, I had almost said pride, of a great Mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of Happiness in any thing without us. Happiness must be within us ; the foundation of it must be laid in the inward frame and disposition of our spirits : And the very same causes and ingredients which make up the Happiness of God must be found in us, tho' in a much inferior degree, or we cannot be happy. They understand not the nature of Happiness, who hope for it upon any other terms : He who is the Author and Fountain of Happiness cannot convey it to us by any other way, than by planting in us such dispositions of mind as are in truth a kind of participation of the Divine Nature, and by enduing us with such qualities as are the necessary Materials of Happiness : And a man may as soon be well without Health as happy without Goodness.

If a wicked man were taken up into Heaven, yet if he still continue the same bad man that he was before, *cælum, non animum mutavit*, he may have chang'd the *Climate*, and be gone into a far Country ; but because he carries *himself* still along with him, he will still be miserable from himself : Because the man's mind is not chang'd all the while, which would signifie a thousand times more to his happiness, than change of place, or of any outward circumstances whatsoever : For a bad man hath a *Fiend* in his own Breast, and the fewel of Hell in his guilty Conscience.

There is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary and essential to Happiness, and *that* is Holiness and Goodness, which is the very Nature of God ; and so far as any man departs from this temper, so far he removes himself and runs away from Happiness. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to it self : And till this be cur'd, it is as impossible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of joint to be at ease ; because the man's Spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were to's'd from its Center ; and till that be set right and restored to its proper and natural state, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no rest and peace within himself. *The wicked, saith the Prophet, is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest : There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked* : No peace with God, no peace with his own mind ; for a bad man is at perpetual discord and wars within himself : And hence, as *St. James* tells us, *come wars and fightings without us, even from our lusts which war in our members.*

And now that I have mention'd *wars and fightings without us*, this cannot but

but bring to mind the great and glorious Occasion of this Day : Which gives us manifold cause of Praise and Thanksgiving to Almighty God : For several wonderful Mercies and Deliverances ; and more particularly, for a most glorious Victory at Sea, vouchsafed to their *Majesties* Fleet in this last Summer's Expedition.

For several great Mercies and Deliverances : For a wonderful Deliverance indeed, from a sudden *Invasion* design'd upon us by the inveterate and implacable Enemies of our Peace and Religion ; which by the merciful Providence of God was happily and strangely prevented, when it was just upon the point of execution.

Next, for the preservation of our *Gracious Sovereign*, from that horrid and most barbarous Attempt design'd upon his Sacred Person : And from those great and manifold Dangers to which he was exposed in his late tedious Expedition : And for His safe and most welcome Return to us.

And lastly, For a most glorious *Victory at Sea* : The greatest and the cheapest that ever the Sun saw, from his first setting out to run his Course. The Opportunity indeed of this Victory was thro' the rashness and confidence of our Enemies, by the wise Providence of God, put into our hands : But the improvement of this Opportunity into so great and happy a Victory, we owe under God, to the matchless Conduct and Courage of the brave *Admiral*, and to the invincible Resolution and Valour of the *Captains* and *Seamen*.

This great Deliverance from the design'd *Invasion*, and this glorious *Victory*, God vouchsafed to us at *Home*, whilst His Sacred Majesty was so freely hazarding his Royal Person *abroad*, in the Publick Cause of the Rights and Liberties of almost all *Europe*.

And now what may God justly expect from us, as a meet return for his Goodness to us ? What ? but that we should glorifie Him, first by offering praise and thanksgiving ; and then, by ordering our conversation aright, that he may still delight to shew us his Salvation.

God might have stood aloof from us in the Day of our Distress, and have said to us, as he once did to the People of *Israel*, so often have I deliver'd you from the hands of your Enemies, but ye have still provok'd me more and more, *Wherefore I will deliver you no more* : He might have said of us, as he did of the same People, *I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be* : For they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith : Our resolutions and promises of better obedience are not to be trusted ; all our Repentance and Righteousness are but as the morning cloud, and like the early dew which passeth away : Nay methinks God seems now to say to us, as he did of old to *Jerusalem*, *Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*. Judg. 10. 13.
Deut. 32. 20.
Jer. 5. 8.

We are here met together this Day, to pay our Solemn acknowledgments to the God of our Salvation ; who hath shewed strength with his arm, and hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart : Even to him that exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth : In Him will we glory as our sure Refuge and Defence, as our Mighty Deliverer, and the Rock of our Salvation.

And now I have only to entreat your patience a little longer, whilst I apply what hath been discoursed upon this Text a little more closely to the Occasion of this Day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And blessed be God for this happy Occasion : The greatest *England* ever had, and, in the true consequences of it, perhaps the greatest that *Europe* ever had of Praise and Thanksgiving.

You have heard two sorts of Persons described in the Text, by very different

rent Characters : The *One*, that glory in their *Wisdom* and *Might*, and *Riches* : The *other*, that glory in *this*, that they understand and know God to be the Lord, which exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

And we have seen these two Characters exemplified, or rather drawn to the Life, in this present Age. We who live in this Western part of Christendom have seen a *mighty Prince*, by the just permission of God, raised up to be a Terror and Scourge to all his Neighbours : A *Prince*, who had in perfection all the Advantages mentioned in the former part of the Text : And who, in the opinion of many who had been long dazzled with his Splendour and Greatness, hath pass'd for many years, for the most *Politick*, and *Powerful*, and *Richest Monarch* that hath appear'd in these parts of the World, for many Ages.

Who hath govern'd his Affairs by the deepest and steadiest Counsels, and the most refin'd Wisdom of this World : A Prince mighty and powerful in his preparations for War ; formidable for his vast and well disciplin'd Armies, and for his great Naval Force : And who had brought the Art of War almost to that perfection, as to be able to Conquer and do his business without fighting : A Mystery hardly known to former Ages and Generations : And all this Skill and Strength united under one absolute Will, not hamper'd or bound up by any restraints of Law or Conscience.

A Prince that commands the Estates of all his Subjects, and of all his Conquests ; which hath furnished him with an almost inexhaustible Treasure and Revenue : And One, who if the World doth not greatly mistake him, hath sufficiently gloried in all these Advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not knowing God to be the Lord, which exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth ; How hath the pride of all his Glory been stain'd by Tyranny and Oppression, by Injustice and Cruelty ; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making War upon his Neighbours without Reason, or even colour of Provocation ? And this in a more barbarous manner than the most barbarous Nations ever did ; carrying Fire and Desolation wheresoever he went, and laying waste many and great Cities without necessity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible Rebuke the Providence of God hath given to this mighty Monarch, in the full Career of his Fortune and Fury. The consideration whereof brings to my thoughts those passages in the Prophet concerning old *Babylon*, that standing and perpetual Type of the great Oppressors and Persecutors of God's true Church and Religion : *How is the Oppressor ceased ? the exacter of gold ceased ? He who smote the People in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the Nations in anger is himself persecuted, and none hindreth. The whole Earth is at rest and is quiet, and breaks forth into singing : The grave beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the Captains of the Earth ; it hath raised up from their Thrones all the Kings of the Nations ; all they shall speak and say unto thee, art thou also become weak as we are ? art thou also become like unto us ? how art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning ? How art thou cut down to the ground that didst weaken the Nations ? For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God : I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North, that is, upon Mount Zion, for just so the Psalmist describes it, Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth is Mount Zion ; on the sides of the North. Here the King of Babylon threatens to take Jerusalem, and to demolish the Temple where the Congregation of Israel met for the Worship of the true God ; I will also sit upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North. Much in the same style*

Isa. 14.

Psal. 48. 2.

with the threatnings of Modern Babylon, I will destroy the Reformation, I will extirpate the Northern Heresie.

And then he goes on, *I will ascend above the height of the Clouds, I will be like the most High: Yet thou shalt be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit: They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the Earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms; that made the World as a Wilderness, and destroyed the Cities thereof, and opened not the House of his Prisoners?*

God seems already to have begun this Work, in the late glorious Victory at Sea; and I hope he will cut it short in righteousness. I have sometimes heretofore wondred, Why at the Destruction of Modern and Mystical Babylon the Scripture should make so express mention of great wailing and lamentation for the loss of her Ships and Seamen: Little imagining thirty years ago, that any of the Kingdoms who had given their power to the Beast would ever have arrived to that mighty Naval Force: But the Scripture saith nothing in vain. Rev. 18. 17.

Whether, and how far, Success is an Argument of a good Cause, I shall not now debate: But thus much, I think may safely be affirmed, That the Providence of God doth sometimes, without plain and down-right Miracles, so visibly shew it self, that we cannot without great stupidity and obstinacy refuse to acknowledge it.

I grant, the Cause must first be manifestly just, before Success can be made an Argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: And if the Cause of true Religion, and the necessary defence of it against a false and idolatrous Worship, be a good Cause, *Ours* is so: And I do not here beg the Question; we have abundantly proved it to the confusion of our Adversaries: If the vindication of the common Liberties of Mankind, against Tyranny and Oppression, be a good Cause, then *Ours* is so: And this needs not to be proved, it is so glaringly evident to all the World. And as our Cause is not like *theirs*, so neither hath *their Rock* been like *our Rock*, *our Enemies themselves being Judges.*

And yet as bad an Argument as success is of a good Cause, I am sorry to say it, but I am afraid it is true, it is like in the conclusion to prove the best Argument of all other to convince those who have so long pretended Conscience against submission to the present Government.

Meer success is certainly one of the worst Arguments in the World of a good Cause, and the most improper to satisfy Conscience: And yet we find by experience, that in the issue it is the most successful of all other Arguments; and does in a very odd, but effectual way, satisfy the Consciences of a great many men by shewing them their Interest.

God has of late visibly made bare his Arm in our behalf, tho' some are still so blind and obstinate that they will not see it: Like those of whom the Prophet complains, *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at thy People.* Isa. 26. 11.

Thus have I represented unto you a mighty Monarch, who like a fiery Comet hath hung over Europe for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made such terrible havock and devastations in this part of the World.

Let us now turn our View to the other part of the Text: And behold a greater than he is here: A Prince of a quite different Character, who does *understand and know God to be the Lord, which doth exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth*: And who hath made it the great study and endeavour of his life to imitate these Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of humane Nature in this mortal state will admit: I say, a greater than he is here: who never said or did an insolent thing, but instead of despising his Enemies, has upon all occasions encounter'd them with an undaunted Spirit and Resolution.

R r r

This

This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a Check to this mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Nostrils of this great *Leviathan* who has so long had his pastime in the Seas.

But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a Man much better than himself, when he believed Him to have been slain at the *Boyne* : And indeed Death came then as near to him as was possible without killing him : But the merciful Providence of God was pleased to step in for his Preservation, almost by a Miracle : For I do not believe that from the first use of great Guns to *that* Day, any mortal man ever had his shoulder so kindly kiss'd by a Cannon-bullet.

But I will not trespass any further upon that which is the great Ornament of all his other Virtues ; though I have said nothing of Him but what all the World does see and must acknowledge : He is as much above being flatter'd, as it is beneath an honest and a generous mind to flatter.

Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our Salvation : Let us now in the presence of all his People pay our most thankful acknowledgements to him *who is worthy to be praised* ; even to the Lord God of Israel, *who alone doth wondrous things* : Who giveth Victory unto Kings, and hath preserved our David his Servant from the hurtful Sword.

And let us humbly beseech Almighty God that he would long preserve to us the invaluable Blessing of our two excellent Princes ; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels ; not to rescue two or three Persons, but almost a whole Nation out of *Sodom* : By saving us I hope at last from our Vices, as well as at first from that Vengeance which was just ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two Sovereign Princes reigning together, and in the same Throne ; and yet so intirely one, as perhaps no Nation, no Age can furnish us with a Parallel : Two Princes perfectly united in the same Design of promoting the true Religion, and the Publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and as far as is possible, by repairing the breaches, and healing the Divisions of a miserable distracted Church and Nation : In a word, Two Princes who are contented to sacrifice Themselves and their whole Time to the care of the Publick : And for the sake of that to deny themselves almost all sorts of ease and pleasure : *To deny themselves*, did I say ? No, they have wisely and judiciously chosen the truest and highest Pleasure that this World knows, the Pleasure of doing good, and being Benefactors to Mankind. May they have a long and happy Reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in store for Themselves a Happiness without measure, and without end, in God's glorious and everlasting Kingdom : For his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

S E R M O N XLII.

Against Evil-speaking.

Preached before the King and Queen at
 WHITEHALL, February the 25th. 169³₄.

T I T. III. 2.

To speak evil of no man.

General Perswasives to Repentance and a good Life, and In-
 vectives against Sin and Wickedness at large, are certainly
 of good use to recommend Religion and Virtue, and to
 expose the deformity and danger of a vicious Course. But
 it must be acknowledg'd on the other hand, that these ge-
 neral Discourses do not so immediately tend to reform the
 Lives of men: Because they fall among the Croud, but do
 not touch the Consciences of particular Persons in so sensible and awakening
 a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and Sins, and endeavour to
 put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other,
 by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of
 particular Virtues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Physician, instead of applying particular Re-
 medicines to the Distemper of his Patient, should entertain him with a long dis-
 course of Diseases in general, and of the pleasure and advantages of Health;
 and earnestly perswade him to be well; without taking his particular Dis-
 ease into consideration, and prescribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great
 and common disorders of their Lives, and represent their faults to them in
 such a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and
 put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vi-
 ces of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-speaking*; by which men contract so much
 guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others: And from which,
 it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, saith the Son of
 Strach, *that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things*, saith St. James,
we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man. Eccl. 19. 16.
James 3. 2.

But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unless we do endea-
 vour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to Religion
 is vain: So the same Apostle tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be re-
 ligious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's* James 1. 26.
Religion is vain.

For the more distinct handling of this Argument, I shall reduce my Dis-
 course to these *Five Heads*.

R r r 2

First,

First, I shall consider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it consists.

Secondly, I shall consider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To speak evil of no man.*

Thirdly, I shall shew the Evil of this practice, both in the Causes and Effects of it.

Fourthly, I shall add some further Considerations to dissuade men from it.

Fifthly, I shall give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

- I. I shall consider *what this Sin or Vice of Evil speaking, here forbidden by the Apostle, is* : *μὴ δὲ να βλασφημεῖν*, not to defame and slander any man, not to hurt his reputation, as the Etymology of the word doth import. So that this Vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is down-right *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and so much the more injurious because really groundless and undeserved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our Neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides: Besides it is contrary to that charity and goodness which *Christianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, tho' they be really guilty of them, without necessity or some other very good reason for it.

Again, It is *Evil-speaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the Text, whether we be the first Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; because the man that is evil spoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we speak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed seems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling*: The latter is more mean and base and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting*.

And Lastly, Whether it be done directly and in express terms, or more obscurely and by way of oblique insinuation; whether by way of down-right reproach, or with some crafty preface of commendation: For so it have the effect to defame, the manner of address does not much alter the case: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot less faulty: For many times the deepest Wounds are given by these smoother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking questions, *Have you not heard so and so of such a man?* I say no more, I only ask the question: Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to say what they have heard of such a one, are very sorry for it, and do not at all believe it*, if you will believe them: And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to suspect the worst.

These and such like Arts, tho' they may seem to be tenderer and gentler ways of using men's reputation, yet in truth they are the most malicious and effectual methods of Slander; because they insinuate something that is much worse than is said, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a strong belief of something that is very bad, tho' they knew not what it is. So that it matters not in what fashion a Slander is dress'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminish his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the Text.

- II. We will consider *the extent of this Prohibition to speak evil of no man; and the due bounds and limitations of it.* For it is not to be understood absolutely,

olutely, to forbid us to say any thing concerning others that is bad. This in some cases may be necessary and our duty, and in several cases very fit and reasonable. The Question is, In what Cases by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reason we are warranted to say the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reason and necessity; as, for the prevention of some great evil, or the procuring of some considerable good to our selves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of Sirach, *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canst without offence reveal them not; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canst conceal them, divulge them not.* Eccl. 19. 8.

But because this may not be direction sufficient, I shall instance in some of the principal Cases wherein men are warranted to speak evil of others, and yet in so doing do not offend against this Prohibition in the Text.

First, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the person of whom evil is spoken. In such a case we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be so fit for us to use that boldness and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other use of this discovery but in order to his amendment. And this is so far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the best Testimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindness to give him the opportunity of vindicating himself: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Case the Son of Sirach adviseth to reveal mens faults; *Admonish a friend*, says he, *it may be he hath not done* Eccl. 19. 13, *it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admonish a friend, it may be* 14, 15. *he hath not said it; and if he have, that he speak it not again: Admonish a friend, for many times it is a slander; and believe not every tale.*

But then we must take care that this be done out of kindness, and that nothing of our own passion be mingled with it: and that under pretence of re-proving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in such a manner as if we did it to shew our authority rather than our charity. It requires a great deal of address and gentle application so to manage the business of Reproof, as not to irritate and exasperate the person whom we reprove instead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewise is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witness concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the publick good, or the prevention of some great evil should require it. And then the plain reason of the thing will sufficiently justify a voluntary accusation: otherwise it hath always among well-manner'd People been esteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward Informer concerning the misdemeanour of others. *Magistrates* may sometimes think it fit to give encouragement to such persons, and to set one bad man to catch another, because such men are fittest for such dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their Friends and Confidants.

But when a man is call'd to give testimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in such Cases, he is so far from deserving blame for so doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publish the fault of others, in our own necessary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal anothers faults with-

out

out betraying his own innocence, no charity requires a man to suffer himself to be defamed to save the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and tho' a man had never so much goodness, he would first secure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other mens. We are to love our Neighbour as our selves; so that the love of our selves is the Rule and measure of our love to our Neighbour: And therefore first, otherwise it could not be the Rule. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would rise thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This also is lawful for caution and warning to a third person, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by reposing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or suspicion of his bad qualities: But even in this case we ought to take great care that the ill character we give of any man be spread no further than is necessary to the good end we designed in it.

Besides these more obvious and remarkable Cases, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary conversation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one friend may not in freedom speak to another of the miscarriage of a third person, where he is secure no ill use will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his Prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or speaking ill of others: And the less we do it, tho' without any malice or design of harm, still the better; because this shews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleasure in them.

These are all the usual Cases in which it may be necessary for us to speak evil of other men. And these are so evidently reasonable that the Prohibition in the Text cannot with reason be extended to them. And if no man would allow himself to say any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in these and the like Cases, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III. III^d place, to consider the evil of this Practice, both in the Causes and the Consequences of it.

First, We will consider the Causes of it. And it commonly springs from one or more of these evil Roots.

First, One of the deepest and most common Causes of evil-speaking is ill-nature and cruelty of disposition: And by a general mistake Ill-nature passeth for Wit, as Cunning doth for Wisdom; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far distant as Vice and Virtue.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneness of Men to this Vice. For (as our Saviour says) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. And therefore men do commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side: which shews humane Nature to be strangely distorted from its original rectitude and innocence. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it self in Satyr and Censure, than in Praise and Panegyrick. When men set themselves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and straining; and if any thing be fitly said in that kind, it doth hardly relish with most men: But in the way of *Invective*, the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more easie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may come to his own turn to lye down and make sport for others.

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To speak evil of others, is almost become the general entertainment of all Companies : And the great and serious business of most Meetings and Visits, after the necessary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to sit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sauce* of Conversation, and all Discourse is counted but flat and dull which hath not something of *piquancy* and sharpness in it against some body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are secretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greediness and delight : Though at the same time they have so much Justice as to hate those that propagate them ; and so much Wit, as to conclude that these very persons will do the same for them in another Place and Company.

But especially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion ; in this Case, all Parties seem to be agreed that they do God great service in blasting the reputation of their Adversaries : And though they all pretend to be *Christians*, and the *Disciples* of *Him* who taught nothing but *kindness* and *meekness* and *charity* ; yet it is strange to see with what a salvage and murderous disposition they will flie at one anothers Reputation and tear it in pieces : And whatever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to bespatter one another in the most bitter and slanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adversaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it ? how many objections do they raise against it ? and with what coldness do they at last admit it ? *It is very well, say they, if it be true : I shall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard so much good of him before. You are a good man your self, but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to ballance the matter, and set things even, they do not clap some infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that so the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other side, every man is a good and substantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one sort of men, tho' all are to blame this way ; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To speak impartially, the Zealots of all Parties have got a *scurvy* trick of lying for the Truth.

But of all sorts of People, I have observed the *Priests* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ablest in this way, and to have the strongest Faith for a lusty Falshood and Calumny. Others will bandy a false Report, and toss it from one hand to another ; but I never knew any that would so hug a Lye and be so very fond of it. They seem to be described by St. *John* in that expression in the Revelation, *Whosoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another shrewd sign that *ill-nature* lies at the root of this Vice is, that we easily forget the good that is said of others, and seldom make mention of it ; but the contrary sticks with us, and lies uppermost in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occasions : And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjust, many times when we do not believe it our selves, we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true* : But in the mean time we give it our *Pass*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of those into whose hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cause of the commonness of this Vice is, that many are so bad themselves, in one kind or other. For to think and speak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man. Our *Blessed Saviour*, speaking of the evil of the *last days*, gives this as the reason of the great decay of Charity among men ; *Because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold.* When men are bad themselves, they are glad of any opportunity to censure others, and are always apt to suspect that evil of other men which they

Mat. 24. 12.

they know by themselves. They cannot have a good opinion of themselves, and therefore are very unwilling to have so of any body else; and for this reason they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them if they can but render others as bad as themselves.

Thirdly, Another source of this Vice is *Malice* and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Passion, they do not consider what is true, but what is spiteful and mischievous; and speak evil of others in revenge of some injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Passions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they speak be true or not. Nay many are so *Devilish*, as to invent and raise false Reports on purpose to blast mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. *James* tells us that the slanderous Tongue is set on fire of Hell: And the Devil hath his very Name from *Calumny* and false Accusation; and it is his *Nature* too, for he is always ready to stir up and foment this evil spirit among them: Nay, the *Scripture* tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuse good men before God; as he did *Job* charging him with *Hypocrisie* to God himself, *Who*, he knows, *does know*, the hearts of all the children of men.

Fourthly, Another Cause of Evil-speaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obscures them, and that their commendable qualities do stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their Virtues may not scorch them. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish any thing that may serve to that purpose, thereby to raise themselves upon the Ruins of other mens Reputation: And therefore as soon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they presently go to send it abroad by the first Post: For the string is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible swiftness, thro' City and Country; for fear the innocent man's justification should over-take it.

Fifthly, Another Cause of Evil-speaking is *Impertinence* and *Curiosity*; an itch of talking and meddling in the Affairs of other Men, which do no wise concern them. Some persons love to mingle themselves in all business, and are loth to seem ignorant of so important a piece of News as the faults and follies of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of discourse in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of something better to talk of, and because their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Lastly, Men do this many times out of *wantonness* and for *diversion*. So little do light and vain men consider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jested withal; and that a slanderous Tongue bites like a Serpent, and wounds like a Sword. For what can be more barbarous, next to sporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation which to some men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleasure which some men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themselves; and this only to divert themselves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this sort of men to distracted persons; As a madman, saith he, who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour; the LXX. render it, So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport? Such, and so bad are the Causes of this Vice. I proceed to consider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Consequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

First, To Others; the Parties I mean that are slandered. To them it is certainly a great *injury*, and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no small *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we say of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all possible reparation. And tho' we should do our utmost endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; because the Vindication seldom reacheth so far as the Reproach, and because commonly men are neither so forward to spread the Vindication, nor is it so easily received after ill impressions are once made. The solicitous Vindication of a man's self is, at the best, but an *after-game*; and for the most part a man had better sit still, than to run the hazard of making the matter worse by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that descends to a man's Children and Posterity; because the good or ill Name of the Father is deriv'd down to them; and many times the best thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemish'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no Conscience to rob his innocent Children of the best part of this small Patrimony, and of all the kindness that would have been done them for their Fathers sake, if his Reputation had not been so undeservedly stain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blast a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Posterity? Can we make a jest of so serious a matter? Of an Injury so very hard to be repented of as it ought, because in such a Case no Repentance will be acceptable without Restitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Case at the best, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is considerably stain'd, though never so deservedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by passing through several hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate Quarrels. This reason the wise Son of Sirach gives why we should defame no man: *Whether it be, says he, to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and observed thee*; that is, one way or other it will probably come to his knowledge, *and when the time cometh he will shew his hatred*; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it. Ecclus. 19. 8, 9.

At the best, it is always matter of *Grief* to the person that is defam'd: And *Christianity*, which is the *best natur'd Institution in the World*, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may *grieve one another*. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

Secondly, The Consequences of this Vice are as bad or worse to *our selves*. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

Matth. 7.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our Saviour says in this very Case, That *with what measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again*; and that many times *heaped up, and running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing*.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and slanderous Speech hath cost many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loss of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loss of his own Soul: And I have often wonder'd among *Christians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

Psal. 34. 12, 13.

And though neither of these great Mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whose kindness and good will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil-speaking*. What man is he, saith the Psalmist, that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood.

James 1. 26.

1 Cor. 6. 10.

Wisdom of Solomon, C. 1. V. 11.

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow our selves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. James expressly tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain*. And St. Paul puts Slanderers and Revilers amongst those that *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*. And our Blessed Saviour hath told us, *That by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned*. To which I will add the counsel given us by the Wise-man, *Refrain your tongue from back-biting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul*. I proceed in the

IVth place, to add *some further Arguments and Considerations to take men off from this Vice*: As,

First, That the use of Speech is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon him for some excellent end and purpose: That by this Faculty we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The Psalmist, as by Interpreters is generally thought, calls our Tongue our Glory; therewith we praise God and bless men. Now to bless is to speak well of any, and to wish them well. So that we pervert the use of Speech and turn our glory into shame, when we abuse this Faculty to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Consider how cheap a kindness it is to speak well, at least not to speak ill of any. A good word is an easie obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our Silence, which costs us nothing. Some instances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and necessities of others: The expence deters many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never so covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at least he might refrain from speaking ill of him: especially if it be consider'd how dear many have paid for a slanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, Consider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one desires such a man's friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praise him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteousness to Men, nothing is thought a more significant commendation,

commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to speak ill of any. It was a singular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Nescivit quid esset maledicere*, *He knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.*

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and consider how himself is apt to be affected with this usage. Speak thy Conscience *Man*, and say whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldst not be glad to have every man's, especially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd and not to be hardly spoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by those whom thou didst never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reason dost thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been so contrary? Nothing surely is more equal and reasonable than that known *Rule*, *What thou wouldst have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to speak reproachfully of others, consider whether you do not lye open to just reproach in the same, or some other kind. Therefore give no Occasion, no Example of this barbarous usage of one another.

There are very few so innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wisest, and most virtuous, and most perfect among men have some little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the railery of a mimical and malicious Wit: Therefore we should often turn our thoughts upon our selves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their shoulders and keep behind them, that they may not see their own Faults: And when we have searched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule*, *He that is without sin, let him first cast the stone.*

Lastly consider, That it is in many Cases as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great necessity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not bestow a small Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpose; *Talk not of other mens lives: If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burst thee.* *I shall* Ecclus. 19. 10.

Vth and last place, give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.

First, *Never say any evil of any man, but what you certainly know.* Whenever you positively accuse and endite any man of any Crime, though it be in private and among Friends, speak as if you were upon your Oath, because God sees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Justice and regard to Truth do demand of us. He that easily credits an ill Report is almost as faulty as the first inventor of it. For though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lie*. Therefore never speak evil of any upon common *Fame*, which for the most part is false, but almost always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in most Cases, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be so: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abstain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with some Persons, and to gain this point of them however; because it would re-trench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-speaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you speak evil of any man, consider whether he hath not obliged you by some real kindness, and then it is a bad return to speak ill of him who hath done us good. Consider also, whether you may not come

hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be ashamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reason also to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Consider likewise, whether in the change of humane Affairs, you may not some time or other come to stand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a spiteful and needless word by a shrewd turn? So that if a man made no conscience of hurting others, yet he should in prudence have some consideration of himself.

Thirdly, Let us accustom our selves to pity the Faults of men, and to be truly sorry for them, and then we shall take no pleasure in publishing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, considering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our selves also are liable to be tempted: Considering likewise, how severe a Punishment every Fault and Miscarriage is to it self; and how terribly it exposeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Christian*, that is not heartily sorry for the faults even of his greatest Enemies; and if he be so, he will discover them no further than is necessary to some good end.

Fourthly, Whenever we hear any man evil spoken of, if we know any good of him let us say *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to stand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuse and bespatter them. Possibly the good you may have heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man should be evil spoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities should be mention'd together; otherwise he may be strangely misrepresented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monster.

They that will observe nothing in a Wise Man, but his over-sights and follies; nothing in a Good Man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable. If one should heap together all the passionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the best Man; all that he had said or done amiss in his whole Life, and present it all at one view, concealing his Wisdom and Vertues; the Man in this Disguise would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And yet if his Life were fairly represented, and just in the same manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues set over against his Failings and Infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Person. But how many and great soever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but just that with all this heavy load of Faults he should have the due Praise of the few real Virtues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not speak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *busy-bodies*, and those that love to talk of other men's Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them because of their Quality, then divert the Discourse some other way; or if you cannot do that, by seeming not to mind it, you may sufficiently signify that you do not like it.

Sixthly, Let every man mind himself, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earnest to mend thy self, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionysius*, who would fain have had

had a famous *Philosopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in some unkindness, and *Dionysius* bad him not to speak ill of him when he was return'd into Greece; *Plato* told him, *he had no leisure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the Faults of so bad a man, so notoriously known to all the World.

Lastly, Let us set a watch before the door of our lips, and not speak but upon consideration: I do not mean to speak *finely*, but *fitly*. Especially when thou speakest of others, consider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to speak: Use great Caution and Circumspection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every side of the thing, and on every person in the Company, before thy words slip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men should be sullen in company, and say nothing; or so stiff in Conversation, as to drop nothing but *Aphorisms* and *Oracles*: Especially among Equals and Friends, we should not be so reserved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchsafe to say any thing. If a Man had the understanding of an *Angel*, he must be contented to abate something of this excess of *Wisdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Conversation, if any body can hit upon it, seems to be this; an appearing freedom and openness, with a resolute reservedness as little appearing as is possible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we should consider well what we say, especially of others. And to this end we should endeavour to get our Minds furnished with matter of Discourse concerning things useful in themselves, and not hurtful to others: And, If we have but a Mind wise enough, and good enough, we may easily find a Field large enough for innocent Conversation; such as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiser part of Mankind: And why should any one be at the cost of playing the fool to gratifie any body whatsoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to speak to upon this Argument. But because hardly any thing can be so clear, but something may be said against it; nor any thing so bad, but something may be pleaded in excuse for it: I shall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

First, Some pretend mighty Injury and Provocation. If in the same kind, it seems thou art sensible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughtest to abstain from it: But in what kind soever it be, the Christian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuse of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practised, Conversation would be spoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleasant Discourse and Entertainment.

I answer, The design of this Discourse is to redress a great evil in Conversation, and that I hope which mends it will not spoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more still, and most of us spake a good deal less than we do, both of our selves and others, I see no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and see many good days. *David*, I am sure, prescribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-speaking; *What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good?* Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falsehood. Psal. 34. 12,

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But granting that there is some pleasure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence* : And the more any man considers this, the truer he will find it ; and whenever we are serious, we our selves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himself impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wish he had not done them. For this certainly is one necessary qualification for the *Blessed Sacrament*, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours* ; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconsistent.

Thirdly, There is yet a more specious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can escape the tongues of men ; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place : Because by this means one great restraint from doing evil would be taken away, which these good men, who are so bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the displeasure of God, will yet abstain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men : Besides, that this seems the most proper punishment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not seem so good and laudable a way to punish one Fault by another : But let no man encourage himself in an evil way with this hope, that he shall escape the Censure of men : When I have said all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-speaking enough in the World to chastise them that do ill : And though we should hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil doings. I wish we could but be perswaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be sufficiently lash'd for their Faults, though we sate by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good Men should be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this punishment upon one another. Therefore let no man presume upon Impunity on the one hand ; and on the other, let no man despair but that this business will be sufficiently done one way or other. I am very much mistaken, if we may not safely trust an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would have said a word or two concerning that more publick sort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, so much in fashion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be said without offence, that how much soever men are pleas'd to see others abused in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn : However I cannot but hope that every man that impartially considers, must own it to be a Fault of a very high nature, to revile those whom God hath placed in Authority over us, and to *slander the footsteps of the Lord's Anointed* : Especially since it is so expressly written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the Rulers of thy People*.

Having represented the great Evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us ? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future ; and so turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it : And then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent ? We may so much the better bear it patiently : imitating herein the Pattern of our *Blessed Saviour*, *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*.

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We may consider likewise, that though it be a misfortune to be evil-spoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore should not put us into Passion, because another man's being injurious to me is no good reason why I should be uneasie to my self. We should not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much less upon our selves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to lose thy Patience. Be not such a fool, as to part with any one Virtue, because some men are so malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the rest. When men speak ill of thee, do as *Plato* said he would do in that case, *Live so, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been said, and to urge you and my self to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practise what we so plainly see to be our Duty. Many are so taken up with the deep *Points* and *Mysteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of humane Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are so far from clashing with one another, that the *Christian Religion* hath made them inseparable. True *Faith* is necessary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the one never ought to be press'd to the prejudice of the other.

I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case; that there is *not one word of Jesus Christ in all this*. No more is there in the *Text*. And yet I hope that *Jesus Christ* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws*, and the *Duties* injoyn'd by the *Christian Religion*, are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleased to say, that *this is mere Morality*: I answer, that this is *Scripture Morality* and *Christian Morality*, and who hath any thing to say against that? Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Christian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of so plain a *Duty*; and in the practice of a *Sin* so clearly condemned by it, as this of *evil-speaking* is.

But because *the Word of God* is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged *Sword*, yea sharper than *Calumny* it self; and pierceth the very Hearts and Consciences of men, laying us open to our selves, and convincing us of our more secret as well as our more visible Faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God*.

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more persuasive and penetrating than any Humane Discourse. And to this end be pleased to consider in what company the *Holy Ghost* doth usually mention this *Sin*. There is scarce any *black Catalogue* of *Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst *Actions* and most irregular *Passions* of men. Out of the heart, says our Saviour, proceed evil thoughts, *murders*, *adulteries*, *fornications*, *false witness*, *evil-speakings*. And the *Apostle* ranks *back-biters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*; and with those of whom it is expressly said that they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Matth. 15. 19.
Rom. 1. 29.
1 Cor. 6. 10.

And when he enumerates the *Sins* of the last times, *Men*, says he, shall be *lovers of themselves*, *covetous*, *boasters*, *evil-speakers*, *without natural affection*, *perfidious*, *false-accusers*, &c. And which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apostle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for so it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*. So that it is no new thing

thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of *Christianity*, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion*: As if any pretence to *Mystery* and I know not what extraordinary attainments in the knowledge of *Christ*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and set them above the Virtues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* so frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the blackest Crimes; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly shut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God*? and can we allow our selves in the common practice of a Sin, than which there is hardly any Fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously branded in that *Holy Book*?

Consider seriously these Texts: *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our Saviour says, that of every idle word we must give an account in the Day of Judgment; that by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd? What can be more severe than that of St. James? *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The Sin, which I have now warned men against, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*; and the Duty which I have now been perswading you to, is easie for every man to understand, not hard for any man, that can but resolve to keep a good guard upon himself for some time, by the grace of God to practise; and most reasonable for all Men, but especially for all *Christians*, to observe. It is as easie as a resolute silence upon just occasion, as reasonable as prudence and justice and charity, and the preservation of peace and good will among men, can make it; and of as necessary and indispensible an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Considerations let every one of us be perswaded to take up David's deliberate Resolution, *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we should soon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this Vice, together with those that are nearly allied to it, and may at the same time, and almost with the same resolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many considerable Virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conscience of his Words should not take an equal or a greater care of his Actions. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reason of that saying of St. James, and with which I shall conclude: *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; To whom be glory for ever, Amen.

CONCERNING
The Divinity and Incarnation
OF OUR
BLESSED SAVIOUR.

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T O T H E

R E A D E R.

TH E following Sermons were preached several years ago, in the Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry in London; and being now revised and enlarged by the Author are here made publick: The true Reason whereof, was not that which is commonly alledged for Printing Books, the Importunity of Friends; but the importunate Clamours and malicious Calumnies of Others, whom the Author heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better Minds: And to grant that the ensuing Discourses, the Publication whereof was in so great a degree necessary, may by his Blessing prove in some measure useful.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XLIII.

Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the

Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, Decemb. the 30th. 1679.

J O H N I. 14.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

THESE words contain in them three great Points concerning our B. Saviour, the Author and Founder of our Faith and Religion.

*First, His Incarnation, the Word was made, or became, flesh.**Secondly, His Life and Conversation here among us, and dwelt amongst us; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his Tabernacle amongst us; he lived here below in this World, and for a time made his residence and abode with us.**Thirdly, That in this state of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity; whilst he appeared as a Man and liv'd amongst us, there were great and glorious Testimonies given of him that he was the Son of God: and that in so peculiar a manner as no Creature can be said to be: And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, &c.*

I shall begin with the *First* of these, his *Incarnation*; as most proper for this Solemn Time, which hath for many Ages been set apart for the commemoration of the Nativity and Incarnation of our B. Saviour. *The Word was made flesh*, that is, he who is personally called the *Word*, and whom the Evangelist St. John had so fully described in the beginning of this Gospel, he became flesh, that is, assumed our Nature and became Man; for so the word *flesh* is frequently used in Scripture for *Man* or humane nature, *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come*, that is, to thee shall all men address their Supplications: again, *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*, that is, all men shall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, *all flesh is grass*, speaking of the frailty and mortality of *Man*: And so likewise in the *New Testament*, our B. Saviour foretelling the misery that was coming upon the *Jewish Nation*, says, *Except those days should be shortened no flesh should be saved*, that is, no man should escape and survive that great calamity and destruction which was coming upon them: *By the works of the Law*, says the *Apostle* *shall no flesh*, that is, no man be justified.

Psal. 65. 2.

Isa. 40. 5, 6.

Mat. 24. 29.

Gal. 2. 16.

So that by the *Word's* being *made* or becoming *flesh*, the Evangelist did not intend that he assumed only a humane Body without a Soul, and was

united only to a humane Body, which was the Heresie of *Apollinaris* and his Followers, but that he became *Man*, that is, assumed the whole humane Nature, Body and Soul. And it is likewise very probable that the *Evangelist* did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of Man, to denote to us that the Son of God did assume our Nature with all its infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and mortality of human Nature.

The words thus explain'd contain that great Mystery of Godliness, as the *Apostle* calls it, or of the *Christian Religion*, viz. the Incarnation of the Son of God, which *St. Paul* expresseth by the appearance or manifestation of God in the flesh, And without controversie great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh, that is, he appeared in human Nature, he became Man; or, as *St. John* expresseth it in the Text, *The Word was made flesh*.

But for the more clear and full explication of these words, we will consider these two things.

First, The Person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be Incarnate, or to be made flesh, namely the Word.

Secondly, The Mystery it self, or the nature of this Incarnation, so far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

I. We will consider the Person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be Incarnate or to be made flesh, and who is so frequently in this Chapter called by the Name or Title of the Word; namely the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for so we find him described in the Text, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c. that is, such as became so great and glorious a Person as deserves the Title of the only begotten Son of God.

For the explaining of this Name or Title of the Word given by *St. John* to our B. Saviour, we will consider these two things.

First, The reason of this Name or Title of the Word, and what probably might be the Occasion why this *Evangelist* insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it.

Secondly, The Description it self, which is given of him under this Name or Title of the Word by this *Evangelist*, in his entrance into his History of the Gospel.

I. We will enquire into the Reason of this Name or Title of the Word, which is here given to our B. Saviour by this *Evangelist*: And what might probably be the Occasion why he insists so much upon it and makes so frequent mention of it. I shall consider these two things distinctly and severally.

First, The Reason of this Name or Title of the Word, here given by the *Evangelist* to our B. Saviour. And he seems to have done it in compliance with the common way of speaking among the Jews, who frequently call the *Messias* by the Name of the Word of the Lord; of which I might give many instances: But there is one very remarkable, in the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, which renders those words of the *Psalmist*, which the Jews acknowledge to be spoken of the *Messias*, viz. *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand*, &c. I say it renders them thus, *The Lord said unto his Word, sit thou on my right hand*, &c. And so likewise *Philo* the Jew calls him by whom God made the World, the Word of God, and the Son of God. And *Plato* probably had the same Notion from the Jews, which made *Amelius* the

Platonist

Platonist, when he read the beginning of St. John's Gospel, to say, *this Barbarian agrees with Plato, ranking the Word in the order of Principles*; meaning that he made the *Word* the *Principle* or efficient Cause of the World, as *Plato* also hath done.

And this Title of the *Word* was so famously known to be given to the *Messias*, that even the Enemies of *Christianity* took notice of it. *Julian* the *Apostate* calls *Christ* by this Name: And *Mahomet* in his *Alchoran* gives this Name of the *Word* to *Jesus the Son of Mary*. But St. *John* had probably no reference to *Plato* any otherwise than as the *Gnosticks*, against whom he wrote made use of several of *Plato's* words and notions. So that in all probability St. *John* gives our *B. Saviour* this Title with regard to the *Jews* more especially, who anciently call'd the *Messias* by this Name.

Secondly, We will in the next place consider, *What might probably be the Occasion why this Evangelist makes so frequent mention of this Title of the Word, and insists so much upon it.* And it seems to be this: Nay, I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, since the most ancient of the *Fathers*, who lived nearest the time of St. *John*, do confirm it to us.

St. *John*, who survived all the *Apostles*, liv'd to see those *Heresies* which sprang up in the beginnings of *Christianity*, during the lives of the *Apostles* grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and disturbance of the *Christian Religion*; I mean the *Heresies* of *Ebion* and *Cerintbus*, and the several *Sects* of the *Gnosticks* which began from *Simon Magus*, and were continued and carried on by *Valentinus* and *Basilides*, *Carpocrates* and *Menander*: Some of which expressly deny'd the Divinity of our *Saviour*, asserting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of existence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*, as *Eusebius* and *Epiphanius* tells us particularly concerning *Ebion*: Which those who hold the same Opinion now in our days may do well to consider from whence it had its Original.

Others of them, I still mean the *Gnosticks*, had corrupted the simplicity of the *Christian Doctrine* by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the *Jewish Cabbalists*, and of the *Schools* of *Pythagorus* and *Plato*, and of the *Chaldean Philosophy* more ancient than either; as may be seen in *Eusebius de Preparat. Evan.* and by jumbling all these together they had framed a confused *Genealogy* of *Deities*, which they call by several glorious Names, and all of them by the general Name of *Æons* or *Ages*: Among which they reckon'd Ζωὴ & λογὸς & Μονογενὴς & Πλήρωμα, that is, the *Life*, and the *Word*, and the *Only begotten*, and the *Fulness*, and many other *Divine Powers* and *Emanations* which they fancied to be successively derived from one another.

And they also distinguished between the *Maker of the World* whom they called the *God* of the *Old Testament*, and the *God* of the *New*: And between *Jesus* and *Christ*. *Jesus* according to the *Doctrine* of *Cerintbus*, as *Irenæus* tells us, being the Man that was born of the *Virgin*, and *Christ* or the *Messias* being that *Divine Power* or *Spirit* which afterwards descended into *Jesus* and dwelt in him.

If it were possible, yet it would be to no purpose, to go about to reconcile these wild conceits with one another; and to find out for what reason they were invented, unless it were to amuse the People with these high swelling words of vanity and a pretence of knowledge falsely so called, as the *Apostle* speaks in allusion to the Name of *Gnosticks*, that is to say, the *Men of knowledge*, which they proudly assum'd to themselves, as if the knowledge of *Mysteries* of a more sublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In opposition to all these vain and groundless conceits, St. *John* in the beginning of his *Gospel* chuses to speak of our *B. Saviour*, the History of whose Life and Death he was going to write, by the Name or Title of the *Word*, a term very famous among those *Sects*: And shews that this *Word of God*, which was also the Title the *Jews* anciently gave to the *Messias*, did exist before he assumed a human Nature, and even from all Eternity; And that to this eternal *Word* did truly belong all those Titles which they kept such a canting stir about, and which they did with so much senseless nicety and subtilty distinguish from one another, as if they had been so many several *Emanations* from the *Deity*: And he shews that this *Word of God*, was really and truly the *Life*, and the *Light*, and the *Fulness*, and the only begotten of the *Father*; v. 5. *In him was the Life, and the Life was the Light of Men*; and v. 6. *And the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not*: and v. 7, 8, 9. where the *Evangelist* speaking of *John the Baptist*, says of him, that he came for a witness, to bear witness of the *Light*; and that he was not that *Light*, but was sent to bear witness of that *Light*: And that *Light* was the true *Light* which coming into the *World* enlightens every man: And v. 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*: And v. 16. *And of his fulness we all receive, &c.* You see here is a perpetual Allusion to the glorious Titles which they gave to their *Æons* as if they had been so many several *Deities*.

In short, the *Evangelist* shews that all this fanciful *Genealogy of Divine Emanations*, with which the *Gnosticks* made so great a noise, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all these glorious Titles did really meet in the *Messias* who is the *Word*, and who before his Incarnation was from all eternity with *God*, partaker of his *Divine Nature and Glory*.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, because the knowledge of it seems to me to be the only true Key to the Interpretation of this Discourse of St. *John* concerning our *Saviour* under the Name and Title of the *Word*. And surely it is a quite wrong way for any Man to go about by the mere strength and subtilty of his Reason and Wit, though never so great, to interpret an ancient Book, without understanding and considering the Historical occasion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal mistake of *Socinus*, to go to interpret Scripture merely by Criticising upon words, and searching into all the senses that they are possibly capable of, till he can find one, though never so forc'd and foreign, that will save harmless the Opinion which he was beforehand resolved to maintain even against the most natural and obvious sense of the Text which he undertakes to interpret: Just as if a Man should interpret ancient *Statutes and Records* by mere Critical skill in words, without regard to the true Occasion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and insight into the History of the Age in which they were written.

I shall now proceed to the Second thing which I proposed to consider, namely,

II. The Description here given of the *Word* by this *Evangelist* in his entrance into his History of the *Gospel*. In the beginning, says he, *was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: The same was in the beginning with God: All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In which Passage of the *Evangelist* four things are said of the *Word* which will require a more particular Explication.

First, That he was in the beginning.

Secondly, That he was in the beginning with God.

Thirdly, That he was God.

Fourthly, That all were made by him.

1st. That he was in the beginning, ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the same with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς from the beginning, where speaking of Christ by the name of eternal life, and of the Word of life, that, says he, which was from the beginning. *Nonnus*, the ancient Paraphrast of St. John's Gospel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being in the beginning, adds, that he was ἀρχαῖα, without time, that is, before all time; and if so, then he was from all eternity: In the beginning was the Word, that is, when things began to be made he was; not then began to be, but then already was, and did exist before any thing was made and consequently is without beginning, for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being: and so the Jews used to describe Eternity, before the World was, and before the foundation of the World, as also in several places of the New Testament. And so likewise Solomon describes the Eternity of Wisdom, The Lord, says he, possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the Earth was: When he prepared the Heaven I was there; then I was with him as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him: And so Justin Martyr explains this very expression of St. John, that he was, or had a Being before all Ages: So likewise Athenagoras, a most ancient Christian Writer, God, says he, who is an invisible Mind, had from the beginning the Word in himself. John 1. 1.

2^{dly}. That in the beginning the Word was with God: And so Solomon, when he would express the Eternity of Wisdom says, it was with God: And so likewise the Son of Sirach speaking of Wisdom, says, it was μετὰ τῷ Θεῷ with God; And so the ancient Jews often called the Word of God, the Word which is before the Lord, that is, with him, or in his presence: In like manner the Evangelist says here, that the Word was with God, that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his Happiness and Glory: To which our Saviour refers in his Prayer, Glorifie me with thine one self with the glory which I had with thee before the World was. And this being with God the Evangelist opposes to his appearing and being manifested to the World, v. 10. He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not; that is, he who from all eternity was with God, appeared in the World, and when he did so, though he had made the World, yet the World would not own him. And this opposition between his being with God and his being manifested in the World, the same St. John mentions elsewhere, I shew unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. Prov. 8. 22, 23, &c.

3^{dly}. That he was God: And so Justin Martyr says of him, That he was God before the World, that is, from all eternity: But then the Evangelist adds by way of Explication, the same was in the beginning with God, that is, tho' the Word was truly and really God, yet he was not God the Father, who is the Fountain of the Deity, but an Emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity with him; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by Divines, and for any thing I could ever see properly enough, the distinction of Persons in the Deity; at least we know not a fitter word whereby to express that great Mystery. John 17. 5.

4^{thly},

ably. That *all things were made by him*. This seems to refer to the description which Moses makes of the Creation, where God is represented creating things by his Word; God said, *Let there be light, and there was light*: And so likewise the Psalmist, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his mouth*: And so St. Peter also expresseth the Creation of the World, *By the Word of the Lord the Heavens were of old, and the Earth made out of Water*: And in the ancient Books of the Chaldeans and the verses ascribed to Orpheus, the Maker of the World is called the Word, and the Divine Word: And so Tertullian tells the Pagans, that by their Philosophers the Maker of the World was called λόγος, the Word, or Reason: And Philo the Jew following Plato, who himself most probably had it from the Jews, says, that the World was created by the Word; whom he calls the Name of God, and the Image of God, and the Son of God: two of which glorious Titles are ascribed to him, together with that of Maker of the World, by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; In these last days, says he, *God hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also he made the Worlds: Who is the brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person*: And to the same purpose St. Paul, speaking of Christ, calls him the Image of the invisible God, the first-born of every Creature, that is, born before any thing was created, as does evidently follow from the Reason given in the next words why he call'd him the first-born of every Creature, for by him were all things created that are in Heaven and in Earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things subsist: From whence it is plain, that by his being the first-born of every Creature thus much at least is to be understood, that he was before all Creatures, and therefore he himself cannot be a Creature, unless he could be before himself: Nay the Apostle says it expressly in this very Text in which he is called the first-born of every Creature, or of the whole Creation, that he is before all things, that is, he had a Being before there was any created Being, he was before all Creatures both in Duration and in Dignity; for so must he of necessity be, if all things were made by him; for as the Maker is always before the thing which is made, so is he also better and of greater Dignity.

Gen. 1.

Psal. 33. 6.

2 Pet. 3. 5.

Colof. 1. 15,
16, 17.

And yet I must acknowledge, that there seems to be no small difficulty in the Interpretation I have given of this expression in which Christ is said by the Apostle to be the first-born of every Creature, or of the whole Creation; because in strictness of speech the first-born is of the same Nature with those in respect of whom he is said to be the first-born: And if so, then he must be a Creature as well as those in respect of whom he is said to be the first-born: This is the Objection in its full strength, and I do own it to have a very plausible appearance: And yet I hope before I have done, to satisfy any one that will consider things impartially and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the scope of the Apostle's reasoning in this Text, and compare it with other parallel places of the New Testament, that it neither is, nor can be the Apostle's meaning in affirming Christ to be the first-born of every Creature to insinuate that the Son of God is a Creature.

For how can this possibly agree with that which follows and is given as the Reason why Christ is said to be the first-born of every Creature? namely, because all things were made by him: The Apostle's words are these, the first-born of every Creature, or of the whole Creation, for by him all things were created: But now, according to the Socinian interpretation, this would be a Reason just the contrary way: For if all things were created by him, then he himself is not a Creature.

So that the Apostle's meaning in this expression must either be that the Son

of God, our B. Saviour was before all Creatures, as it is said presently after that *he is before all things*; and then the Reason which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *he is before all things* because *all things were created by him*: In which sense it is very probable that the Son of God elsewhere calls himself *the beginning of the Creation of God*, meaning by it, as the Philosophers most frequently use the word ἀρχή, the Principle or Efficient Cause of the Creation: And so we find the same word, which our Translation renders *the beginning*, used together with the word *first-born*, as if they were of the same importance; *the beginning and first-born from the dead*, that is, the Principle and Efficient Cause of the Resurrection of the Dead. Rev. 3. 14.
Col. 1. 18.

Or else, which seems to me to be the most probable, and indeed the true meaning of the Expression, by this Title of *the first-born of every Creature*, the Apostle means, that he was Lord and Heir of the Creation: For the *first-born* is natural Heir, and Justinian tells us, that Heir did anciently signify Lord: And therefore the Scripture uses these terms promiscuously, and as if they were equivalent: for whereas St. Peter saith of Jesus Christ, that *he is Lord of all*, St. Paul calls him *Heir of all things*: And then the Reason given by the Apostle why he calls him *the first-born of every Creature* will be very fit and proper, because *all things were Created by him*: For well may he be said to be Lord and Heir of the Creation who *made all things that were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made*. Acts 10. 36.
Rom. 4. 14.

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we consider, that the Apostle to the Hebrews, (who, by several of the Ancients, was thought to be St. Paul, where he gives to Christ some of the very same Titles which St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians had done, calling him, the Image of God, and the Maker of the World) does instead of the Title of the *first-born of every Creature*, call him *the Heir of all things*; and then adds, as the Reason of this Title, that *by him God made the Worlds*; God, says he, *bath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath constituted Heir of all things: Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person, and upholding all things by the Word of his power, &c.* Which is exactly parallel with that passage of St. Paul to the Colossians, where Christ is call'd *the Image of the invisible God*, and where it is likewise said of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do subsist*, which the Apostle to the Hebrews, in different words, but to the very same sense, expresseth by his *upholding all things by the Word of his power*; that is, by the same powerful Word by which all things at first were made: But then instead of calling him *the first-born of every Creature*, because *all things were made by him*, he calls him *the Heir of all things, by whom God also made the Worlds*.

And indeed that expression of *the first-born of every Creature* cannot admit of any other sense which will agree so well with the Reason that follows as the sense which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *Heir and Lord of the whole Creation*, because *all Creatures were made by him*; which exactly answers those words of the Apostle to the Hebrews, *whom he hath constituted Heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds*.

And now I appeal to any sober and considerate Man, whether the Interpretation which I have given of that expression of the *first-born of every Creature* be not much more agreeable both to the tenour of the Scripture, and to the plain scope and design of the Apostle's Argument and Reasoning in that Text.

I have insisted the longer upon this, because it is the great Text upon which the Arians lay the main strength and stress of their Opinion that the Son of God is a Creature, because he is said by the Apostle to be *the first-born*.

born of every Creature ; by which expression if no more be meant than that he is *Heir* and *Lord* of the whole Creation, which I have shewed to be very agreeable both to the use of the word *first-born* among the *Hebrews*, and likewise to the description given of Christ in that parallel Text which I cited out of the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, then this expression of *the first-born of every Creature* is nothing at all to the purpose either of the *Arians* or the *Socinians*, to prove the Son of God to be a Creature : Besides, that the Interpretation which I have given of it makes the *Apostle's* sense much more current and easie ; for then the Text will run thus, *who is the Image of the invisible God, Heir and Lord of the whole Creation, for by him all things were made.*

So that in these four expressions of the *Evangelist* which I have explain'd there are these four things distinctly affirmed of the *Word*.

First, That *he was in the beginning*, that is, that he already was and did exist when things began to be created : He was before any thing was made, and consequently is without any beginning of Time ; for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being.

Secondly, That in that state of his existence before the Creation of the World he was partaker of the Divine Glory and Happiness : And this I have shew'd to be the meaning of that expression, *and the Word was with God* : For thus our *B. Saviour* does explain his being with God before the World was, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thy own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the World was.*

Thirdly, That *he was God* ; *And the Word was God*. Not *God the Father*, who is the Principle and fountain of the Deity : To prevent that mistake, after he had said that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next verse, *the same was in the beginning with God* : He was God by participation of the Divine Nature and Happiness together with the *Father*, and by way of derivation from him as the Light is from the Sun : Which is the common illustration which the ancient *Fathers* of the *Christian Church* give us of this Mystery, and is perhaps the best and fittest that can be given of it. For among finite Beings it is not to be expected, because not possible, to find any exact resemblance of that which is infinite, and consequently is incomprehensible, because whatever is infinite is for that reason incomprehensible by a finite understanding, which is too short and shallow to measure that which is infinite ; and whoever attempts it will soon find himself out of his depth.

Fourthly, That *all things were made by him* : Which could not have been more emphatically express'd than it is here by the *Evangelist*, after the manner of the *Hebrews*, who when they would say a thing with the greatest force and certainty, are wont to express it both affirmatively and negatively ; as, *He shall live and not die*, that is, he shall most assuredly live ; so here, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* ; that is, he made all Creatures without exception, and consequently he himself is not a Creature, because it is evidently impossible that any thing should ever make it self : But then if it be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all Eternity.

All these Assertions are plainly and expressly contain'd in this Description which the *Evangelist* *St. John* here makes of the *Word* ; and this according to the Interpretation of these Expressions by the unanimous consent of the most ancient *Writers* of the *Christian Church* : who, some of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate Disciples of *St. John* : Which

Which surely is no small prejudice against any newly invented and contrary Interpretation ; as I shall hereafter more fully shew, when I come to consider the strange and extravagant Interpretation which the *Socinians* make of this Passage of *St. John* ; which is plain enough of it self, if they under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear had not disturb'd and darkened it.

Now from this description which the Evangelist here gives of the *Word*, and which I have so largely explain'd in the foregoing Discourse, these three *Corollaries* or Conclusions do necessarily follow.

First, That the *Word* here described by *St. John* is not a Creature. This Conclusion is directly against the *Arians*, who affirm'd, that the Son of God was a Creature. They grant indeed that he is the first of all the Creatures both in *Dignity* and *Duration* ; for so they understand that expression of the *Apostle* wherein he is called *the first born of every Creature* : But this I have endeavour'd already to shew not to be the meaning of that expression.

They grant him indeed to have been God's *Agent* or *Instrument* in the Creation of the World, and that all other Creatures besides himself were made by him : But still they contend that he is a Creature and was made : Now this cannot possibly consist with what *St. John* says of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already shewn, before any thing was made : And likewise, because he is said to have *made all things*, and that *without him was not any thing made that was made* ; and therefore he himself who made all things is necessarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a Creature ; as the *Apostle* reasons in another Case, *He hath put all things under his feet* : But when he saith *all things are put under him*, it is manifest, that he is excepted who did put all things under him : In like manner, if by him all things were made, and without him was not any thing made that was made, then either he was not made, or he must make himself ; which involves in it a plain Contradiction.

Secondly, That this *Word* was from all Eternity : For if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he must of necessity always have been ; because whatever is, must either have been sometime made, or must always have been ; for that which was not, and afterwards is, must be made. And this will likewise follow from his being said to *be God*, and that in the most strict and proper sense, which doth necessarily imply his Eternity, because God cannot begin to be, but must of necessity always have been.

Thirdly, From both these it will undeniably follow, that he had an existence before his Incarnation and his being born of the *B. Virgin*. For if *he was in the beginning*, that is, from all Eternity, which I have shewn to be the meaning of that expression, then certainly he was before his being born of the *B. Virgin*. And this likewise is implied in the Proposition in the Text, *And the Word was made flesh*, viz. that *Word* which the Evangelist had before so gloriously described, that *Word* which *was in the beginning*, and *was with God*, and *was God*, and *by whom all things were made* ; I say, that *Word* was incarnate and assumed a humane Nature, and therefore must necessarily exist and have a Being before he could assume humanity into an union with his Divinity.

And this Proposition is directly levelled against the *Socinians*, who affirm our *B. Saviour* to be a mere Man, and that he had no existence before he was born of the *Virgin Mary* his Mother : Which Assertion of theirs doth perfectly

perfectly contradict all the former Conclusions which have been drawn from the Description here given by St. *John* of the *Word*: And their Interpretation of this passage of St. *John* applying it to the beginning of the publication of the *Gospel*, and to the new *Creation* or Reformation of the World by *Jesus Christ*, doth likewise contradict the Interpretation of this passage constantly received, not only by the ancient *Fathers*, but even by the general consent of all *Christians* for fifteen hundred years together, as I shall hereafter plainly shew: For to establish this their Opinion, that our *B. Saviour* was a mere Man, and had no existence before his Birth, they are forc'd to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. *John's* Gospel quite to another sense, never mention'd, nor, I believe, thought of by any *Christian* Writer whatsoever before *Socinus*: And it is not easie to imagine how any Opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I should now take into consideration, and shew, besides the novelty of this Interpretation and the great violence and unreasonableness of it, the utter inconsistency of it with other plain Texts of the *New Testament*.

But this is wholly matter of Controversie and will require a large Discourse by it self; I shall therefore wave the further prosecution of it at present, and apply my self to that which is more practical and proper for the Occasion of this *Season*: So that at present I have done with the first thing contain'd in the first part of the Text, viz. The Person here spoken of who is said to be Incarnate, namely, the *Word*, it was He that was made flesh.

I should then have proceeded to the Second thing which I propos'd to consider, viz. The *Mystery* it self, or the nature of this *Incarnation* so far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by assuming our Nature in such a manner as that the Divinity became united to a humane Soul and Body. But this I have already endeavour'd in some measure to explain, and shall do it more fully in some of the following Discourses upon this Text. I shall now only make a short and useful reflection upon it with relation to the Solemnity of this Time.

And it shall be to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to Mankind in the Mystery of our Redemption by the *Incarnation* of the *Word*, the only begotten Son of God: That he should deign to have such a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our Case so much to heart as to think of redeeming and saving Mankind from that depth of misery into which we had plunged our selves; and to do this in so wonderful and astonishing a manner: That God should employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all Eternity, partaker of his Happiness and Glory, and was *God of God*, to save the Sons of Men by so infinite and amazing a condescension: That God should vouchsafe to become Man, to reconcile Man to God: That he should come down from Heaven to Earth, to raise us from Earth to Heaven: That he should assume our vile and frail and mortal nature, that he might cloath us with glory and honour and immortality: That he should suffer Death to save us from Hell, and shed his blood to purchase eternal Redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the Person is that was employed in this merciful Design, so much the greater is the condescension, and the love and goodness expressed in it so much the more admirable: That the Son of God should stoop from the height of Glory and Happiness to the lowest degree of abasement and to the very depth of misery for our sakes, who were so mean and inconsiderable, so guilty and obnoxious to the severity of his Justice, so altogether unworthy of his Grace and Favour, and so very unwilling

willing to receive it when it was so freely offer'd to us; for, as the *Evan-*
gelist here tells us, *He came to his own, and his own received him not*: To his
own Creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their Maker; to
his own Nation and Kindred, and they despised him and esteemed him not.
Lord! what is Man, that God should be so mindful of him; or the Son of
Man, that the Son of God should come down from Heaven to visit him, in
so much humility and condescension, and with so much kindness and com-
passion.

Blessed God and Saviour of Mankind! What shall we render to thee for
such mighty Love, for such inestimable Benefits as thou hast purchased for
us, and art ready to confer upon us? What shall we say to thee, O thou
preserver and lover of Souls, so often as we approach thy *Holy Table*, there
to commemorate this mighty Love of thine to us, and to partake of those
invaluable Blessings which by thy precious bloodshedding thou hast obtain-
ed for us? So often as we there remember, that thou wast pleased to assume
our mortal Nature, on purpose to live amongst us for our Instruction, and
for our Example, and to lay down thy life for the Redemption of our Sou's
and for the Expiation of our Sins; and to *take part of flesh and blood* that
thou mightest shed it for our sakes: What Affections should these thoughts
raise in us? What Vows and Resolutions should they engage us in, of per-
petual love and gratitude, and obedience to thee the most gracious and most
glorious Redeemer of Mankind?

And with what Religious Solemnity should we, more especially at this
Time, celebrate the *Incarnation* and Birth of the Son of God, by giving praise
and glory to God in the highest, and by all possible demonstration of charity
and good-will to men? And as he was pleased to assume our Nature, so should
we, especially at this Season, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, sincerely
embrace and practise his Religion, *making no provision for the flesh to fulfil
the lusts thereof*: And now that the *Sun of Righteousness* is risen upon the
World, we should *walk as Children of the light, and demean our selves decent-
ly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wan-
tonness, not in strife and envy*: And should be very careful not to abuse our
selves by Sin and Sensuality, upon this very consideration that the Son hath
put such an honour and dignity upon us: We should reverence that Nature
which God did not disdain to assume and to inhabit here on Earth, and in
which he now gloriously reigns in Heaven, at the right hand of his Fa-
ther; *to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N XLIV.

Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the

Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, January 6. 1679.

J O H N I. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

I Proceed now to prosecute the *third Corollary* or Conclusion, which does necessarily follow from the Description which St. John in the beginning of his Gospel gives of the Word, and which I have so largely explain'd in the foregoing Discourse: And it was this,

That *the Word*, here described by the Evangelist, *had an existence before his Incarnation and his being born of the B. Virgin.*

This Assertion, I told you, is levelled directly against the Socinians, who affirm our B. Saviour to be a mere Man, and deny that he had any existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary his Mother: which Position of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former Conclusions which have been so evidently drawn from the Description here given of the Word: And not only so, but hath forced them to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. John's Gospel in a very different sense from that which was constantly received, not only by the ancient Fathers, but by the general consent of all Christians 1500 years together: For to establish this their Opinion of our Saviour's being a mere Man and having no existence before his Birth, they have found it necessary to expound this whole passage quite to another sense, and such as by their own confession was never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any Christian Writer whatsoever before Socinus.

For this Reason I shall very particularly consider the Interpretation which Socinus gives of this Passage of St. John; and besides the novelty of it, which they themselves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifest the great Violence and Unreasonableness, and likewise the Inconsistency of it with other plain Texts of the New Testament.

It is very evident what it was that forc'd Socinus to so strain'd and violent an Interpretation of this Passage of the Evangelist, namely, that he plainly saw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally receiv'd Interpretation of this Passage, in all Ages of the Christian Church down to his time, stood in the way of his Opinion, of Christ's being a mere Man, which he was so fond of, and must of necessity have quitted, unless he would either have denied the Divine Authority of St. John's Gospel, or else could supplant the common Interpretation of this Passage by putting a quite different sense upon it: Which sense he could find no way to support without such pitiful and wretched shifts, such precarious and arbitrary Supposition, as a Man of so sharp a Reason and Judgment as Socinus, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But necessity hath no Laws either of Reason or Modesty.

desty, and he who is resolved to maintain an Opinion which he hath once taken up must stick at nothing, but must break through all difficulties that stand in his way : And so the Socinians have here done, as will, I hope, manifestly appear in the following Discourse.

They grant, that by the *Word* is here meant *Christ*, by whom God spake and declared his Mind and Will to the World ; which they make to be the whole Reason of that Name or Title of the *Word* which is here given him, and not because by Him God made the World : For the *Word* by which God made the World, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful Command of God, and not a Person who was design'd to be the *Messias*. And because, as I have shewed before, the ancient *Jews* do make frequent mention of this Title of the *Word of God* by whom they say *God made the World*, and do likewise apply this Title to the *Messias* ; therefore to avoid this, *Schlichtingius* says, that the *Chaldee Paraphrasis*, *Jonathan* and *Onkelos*, do sometimes put the *Word of God* for *God*, by a *Metonymy* of the Effect for the Cause ; but then he confidently denies that they do any where distinguish the *Word* of God from the *Person* of God, as they acknowledge that *St. John* here does ; nor do they, says he, understand by the *Word of God* the *Messias*, but on the contrary, do oppose the *Word of God* to the *Messias* : All which is most evidently confuted by that passage which I cited before out of the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, who renders those words concerning the *Messias*, *The Lord said unto my Lord*, &c. thus, *The Lord said unto his Word, sit thou on my right hand*, &c. where you see both that the *Word of God* is plainly distinguished from *God*, and that it is the Title given to the *Messias* ; which are the two things which *Schlichtingius* doth so confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by the *Word*, *St. John* means the *Messias*, I shall in the next place, shew by what strained and forced arts of Interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this Passage of *St. John*, namely, that the *Word* had an Existence before he was *made flesh* and born of the *B. Virgin* his Mother.

This then, in short, is the Interpretation which they give of this Passage, than which I think nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

In the beginning ; This they will by no means have to refer to the *Creation* of the World, but to the beginning of the *Gospel* ; that is, when the *Gospel* first began to be published ; then was *Christ*, and not before : *And he was with God*, that is, says *Socinus*, *Christ* as he was the *Word of God*, that is, the *Gospel of Christ* which was afterwards by him revealed to the World was first only known to God : But all this being somewhat hard, first to understand by the *beginning* not the *beginning* of the World but of the *Gospel* ; and then by the *Word* which *was with God* to understand the *Gospel* which before it was revealed was only known to God ; they have upon second thoughts found out another meaning of those words ; *And the Word was with God*, that is, saith *Schlichtingius*, *Christ* was taken up by God into Heaven, and there instructed in the Mind and Will of God, and from thence sent down into the World again to declare it to Mankind.

And the Word was God ; that is, say they, *Christ* had the Honour and Title of God conferr'd upon him, as *Magistrates* also have, who in the *Scripture* are called *Gods* : *He was God*, not by *Nature* but by *Office* and by *Divine* constitution and appointment.

All things were made by him : This they will needs have to be meant of the *Renovation* and *Reformation* of the World by *Jesus Christ*, which is several times in *Scripture* call'd a *new Creation*.

This

This, in short, is the Sum of their Interpretation of this Passage, which I shall now examine, and to which I shall oppose *three* things as so many invincible prejudices against it.

First, That not only all the ancient *Fathers* of the *Christian Church*, but so far as I can find, all *Interpreters* whatsoever for *fifteen hundred* years together did understand this Passage of *St. John* in a quite different sense namely, of the *Creation* of the *material*, and not of the *Renovation* of the *moral World*: And I add further, that the generality of *Christians* did so understand this Passage, as to collect from it as an undoubted *Point of Christianity*, that the *Word* had a real existence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*.

And thus not only the *Orthodox Christians*, but even the *Arians*, and *Amelius the Platonist*, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did understand this Passage of *St. John*, without any thought of this Invention that he spake not of the *old*, but of the *new Creation* of the *World* by *Jesus Christ*, and the Reformation of Mankind by the preaching of the *Gospel*: Which I dare say no indifferent Reader of *St. John*, that had not been prepossess'd and byass'd by some violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And surely it ought to be very considerable in this Case, that the most ancient *Christian Writers*, *Ignatius*, *Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Irenaeus*, *Tertullian*, and even *Origen* himself who is called the *Father of Interpreters*, are most express and positive in this matter. For *Ignatius* was the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who was a Disciple of *St. John*; and *Justin Martyr* lived in the next Age to that of the *Apostles*; and *Origen* was a Man of infinite Learning and Reading, and in his *Comments* upon *Scripture* seems to have considered all the *Interpretations* of those that were before him: So that if this, which *Socinus* is so confident is the true sense of *St. John*, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reason, yet for the surprising novelty and strangeness of it, with which he was apt to be over-much delighted.

So that if this Interpretation of *Socinus* be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almost incredible, *First*, that those who lived so very near *St. John's* Time, and were most likely to know his meaning, as *Ignatius*, *Justin Martyr*, &c. should so widely mistake it: And then, that the whole *Christian World* should for so many Ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of so important an *Article* of Faith, if it were true; or if it were not, should be led into so gross and dangerous an Error as this must needs be, if *Christ* had no real existence before he was born in the *World*: And which would be necessarily consequent upon this, that no Man did understand this Passage of *St. John* aright before *Socinus*. This very consideration alone, if there were no other, were sufficient to stagger any prudent Man's belief of this Interpretation.

And as to the *Novelty* of it, *Socinus* himself makes no difficulty to own it; nay he seems rather to rejoice and to applaud himself in it. Unhappy Man! that was so wedded to his own Opinion that no Objection, no Difficulty could divorce him from it!

And for this I refer my self to his *Preface* to his Explication of this first Chapter of *St. John's Gospel*; where you shall find these words concerning the Passage now in Controversie, *Quorum verus sensus omnium prorsus, qui quidem extarent, explanatores latuisse videtur*; The true sense of which words, says he, seems to have been hid from all the *Expositors* that ever were extant: And upon these words, v. 10. He was in the *World*, and the *World* was made by

by him, he hath this expression, *quid autem hoc loco sibi velit Johannes, à nemine quod sciam adhuc rectè expositum fuit*, but what St. John means in this place was never yet, that I know of, by any Man rightly explain'd: And Schlictingius after him, with more confidence but much less decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of those expressions, in the beginning, and of those which follow concerning the Word, the ancient Interpreters did *ab Apostoli mente delirare*, went so far from the Apostle's meaning as if they had rav'd and been out of their wits: Which is so extravagantly said, and with so much contempt of those great and venerable Names, who were the chief Propagators of Christianity in the World, and to whom all Ages do so justly pay a Reverence, that nothing can be said in excuse of him but only that it is not usual with him to fall into such rash and rude expressions. But the Man was really pinch'd by so plain and pressing a Text, and where Reason is weak and blunt, Passion must be whetted, the only weapon that is left when Reason fails: And I always take it for granted, that no Man is ever Angry with his Adversary but for want of a better Argument to support his Cause.

And yet to do right to the Writers on that side, I must own, that generally they are a Pattern of the fair way of disputing, and of debating matters of Religion without heat and unseemly reflections upon their Adversaries, in the number of whom I did not expect that the Primitive Fathers of the Christian Church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from passion and transport which becomes a serious and weighty Argument: And for the most part they reason closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency, and yet with smartness and subtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: Virtues to be praised where-ever they are found, yea even in an Enemy, and very worthy our imitation: In a word, they are the strongest managers of a weak Cause and which is ill-founded at the bottom, that perhaps ever yet medled with Controversie: Infomuch that some of the Protestants and the generality of the Popish Writers, and even of the Jesuits themselves, who pretend to all the Reason and Subtilty in the World, are in comparison of them but mere Scolds and Bunglers: Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good Cause and Truth on their Side; which if they had, they have Reason, and Wit, and Temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the business. That which I urge them withal, and that from their own Confession, is this, that this Interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole Christian World before Socinus; and for that Reason, in my Opinion, not to be bragg'd of: Because it is in effect to say that the Christian Religion, in a point pretended on both Sides to be of the greatest moment, was never rightly understood by any since the Apostles days, for fifteen hundred years together: And which makes the matter yet worse, that the Religion which was particularly design'd to overthrow Polytheism and the belief of more Gods, hath, according to them, been so ill taught and understood by Christians for so many Ages together, and almost from the very beginning of Christianity, as does necessarily infer a Plurality of Gods: An inconvenience so great, as no Cause, how plausible soever it may otherwise appear, is able to stand under and to sustain the weight of it.

For this the Socinians object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable consequence of our Interpretation of this Passage of St. John, and of all other

Texts of Scripture produced by us to the same purpose, notwithstanding that this Interpretation hath obtain'd in the *Christian* Church for so many Ages: Now whosoever can believe that the *Christian* Religion hath done the Work for which it was principally design'd so ineffectually, must have very little reverence for it; nay, it must be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it at all. All that can be said in this Case is, that it pleases God many times to permit Men to hold very inconsistent things, and which do in truth, tho' they themselves discern it not, most effectually overthrow one another.

Secondly, Another mighty prejudice against this Interpretation is this, that according to this rate of liberty in interpreting *Scripture*, it will signifie very little or nothing, when any Person or Party is concern'd to oppose any Doctrine contained in it; and the plainest *Texts* for any *Article* of Faith, how fundamental and necessary soever, may by the same arts and ways of Interpretation be eluded and render'd utterly ineffectual for the establishing of it: For example. If any Man had a mind to call in question that *Article* of the *Creed* concerning the *Creation of the World*, why might he not, according to *Socinus* his way of Interpreting *St. John*, understand the first Chapter of *Genesis* concerning the beginning of the *Mosaical* Dispensation, and Interpret the *Creation of the Heaven and the Earth* to be the Institution of the *Jewish* Polity and Religion, as by the *new Heavens* and the *new Earth* they pretend is to be understood the new State of things under the *Gospel*? And why may not the *Chaos* signifie that state of Darkness and Ignorance in which the World was before the giving of the Law by *Moses*? And so on; as a very learned *Divine* of our own hath ingeniously shewn more at large.

Dr. Stillingfleet, now Bishop of Worcester.

There is no end of Wit and Fancy, which can turn any thing any way, and can make whatever they please to be the meaning of any *Book*, though never so contrary to the plain design of it, and to that sense which at the first hearing and reading of it is obvious to every Man of common sense.

And this, in my Opinion, *Socinus* hath done in the Case now before us, by imposing a new and odd and violent sense upon this Passage of *St. John*, directly contrary to what any Man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewise to the sense of the *Christian* Church in all Ages down to his Time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of understanding *St. John* aright, and as much Integrity as any Man can now modestly pretend to: And all this only to serve and support an *Opinion* which he had entertain'd before, and therefore was resolv'd one way or other to bring the *Scripture* to comply with it: And if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at last have called in question the Divine Authority of *St. John's Gospel* rather than have quitted his *Opinion*.

And to speak freely, I must needs say that it seems to me a much fairer way to reject the Divine Authority of a *Book*, than to use it so disingenuously, and to wrest the plain expressions of it with so much straining and violence from their most natural and obvious sense: For no Doctrine whatsoever can have any certain foundation in any *Book*, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain Scope and Occasion of it to play upon the words and phrases with all the arts of *Criticism* and with all the variety of *Allegory* which a brisk and lively Imagination can devise: which I am so far from admiring in the expounding of the *Holy Scriptures*, that I am always jealous of an over-labour'd and far-fetch'd Interpretation of any *Author* whatsoever.

I do readily grant, that the *Socinian* Writers have managed the Cause of the *Reformation* against the Innovations and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* both in Doctrine and Practice, with great accuteness and advantage

in many respects: But I am sorry to have cause to say, that they have likewise put into *their* hands better and sharper weapons than ever they had before for the weakning and undermining of the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, which *Socinus* indeed hath in the general strongly asserted, had he not by a dangerous liberty of imposing a foreign and forc'd sense upon *particular* Texts brought the *whole* into uncertainty.

Thirdly, Which is as considerable a prejudice against this new Interpretation of this Passage of *St. John* as either of the former, I shall endeavour to shew, that this *Point*, of the existence of the *Word* before his *Incarnation*, does not rely only upon this single Passage of *St. John*, but is likewise confirmed by many other *Texts* of the *New Testament* conspiring in the same sense and utterly incapable of the Interpretation which *Socinus* gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted that this is the only *Text* in the *New Testament* to this purpose: And therefore he says very cunningly, that this Doctrine of the existence of the Son of God before his *Incarnation* is too great a Doctrine to be establish'd upon one single *Text*: And this is something, if it were true, that there is no other *Text* in the *New Testament* that does plainly deliver the same sense: And yet this were not sufficient to bring in question the Doctrine deliver'd in this Passage of *St. John*.

That *God is a Spirit* will I hope be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental Point of Religion, and yet I am very much mistaken if there be any more than one *Text* in the whole *Bible* that says so, and that *Text* is only in *St. John's* Gospel. I know it may be said, that from the light of natural Reason it may be sufficiently prov'd that God is a Spirit: But surely *Socinus* of all Men, cannot say this with a good grace; because he denies that the existence of a God can be known by natural light without Divine Revelation: And if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God, much less can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a Spirit or a Body.

And yet after all it is very far from being true that there is but one *Text* to this purpose; which yet he thought fit to insinuate by way of excuse for the novelty and boldness of his Interpretation; of which any one that reads him may see that he was sufficiently conscious to himself, and therefore was so wise as to endeavour by this sly insinuation to provide and lay in against it. I have likewise another Reason which very much inclines me to believe that *Socinus* was the first Author of this Interpretation, because it seems to me next to impossible, that a Man, of so good an Understanding as he was, could ever have been so fond of so ill-favour'd a Child if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his Followers came in to it so readily, since they had him in so great a veneration, it being natural to all *Sects* to admire their *Master*; besides that I doubt not but they were very glad to have so great an Authority as they thought him to be, to vouch for an Interpretation which was so seasonably devis'd for the relief of their Cause, in so much danger to be overthrown by a *Text* that was so plain and full against them.

And how little ground there is for this Insinuation, that this is the only *Text* in the *New Testament* to this purpose, I shall now shew from a multitude of other *Texts* to the same sense and purpose with this Passage of *St. John*. And I shall rank them under *two* Heads.

First, Those which expressly assert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his *Incarnation* and appearance in the World.

Secondly, Those which affirm that the World and all Creatures whatsoever were made by him.

I. Those Texts which expressly assert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his *Incarnation* and appearance in the World.

John 3. 13. *No Man hath ascended into Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven*: Where the Son is said to have come down from Heaven, in respect of the Union of his Divinity with human Nature and his special residence in it here below: And yet he is said to have come down from Heaven as still to be in Heaven: He that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven, that is, in respect of his Divinity by which he is every-where present: And he that came down from Heaven is here called the Son of Man, by the same Figure that his Blood is elsewhere called the Blood of God, the Apostle ascribing that to one Nature which is proper to the other: this we take to be the most natural and easie sense of this Text, and most agreeable to the tenour of the New Testament.

John 6. 62. Again, *What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?* So that if he really ascended up into Heaven after his Resurrection, he was really there before his Incarnation.

John 8. 58. *Before Abraham was*, says our B. Saviour, *I am*; the obvious sense of which words is, that he had a real existence before Abraham was actually in Being.

John 13. 3. Again it is said, that *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, &c.*

John 16. 27. v. 28. And again; *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World; again, I leave the World, and go to the Father*: This was so very plain, that his Disciples who were slow enough of apprehension in other things, did understand this so well that upon this declaration of his they were convinc'd of his Omniscience, which is an incommunicable Property of the Divinity: For so it immediately follows, *His Disciples said unto him Lord, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no Parable: Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declar'd must be the meaning of our Saviour's words, or else his Disciples were grossly mistaken and did not understand him at all: And if so, then surely our Saviour before he had proceeded any further would have corrected their mistake and have set them right in this matter: But so far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have understood him aright: For thus it follows, *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had said, *I am glad that you are at last convinc'd and do believe that I came from God, and must return to him; and that I know all things, which none but God can do.* Is it now possible for any Man to read this Passage and yet not to be convinced that the Disciples understood our Saviour to speak literally? But if his meaning was as the Socinians would make us believe, then the Disciples did perfectly mistake his words; the contrary whereof is I think very plain and evident beyond all contradiction.

v. 31.

Again,

Again, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thine own self, with the glory* John 17. 5.
which I had with thee, before the World was : This surely is not spoken of
 his being with God after his Incarnation, and before his entrance upon his
 publick Ministry : They have not, I think, the face to understand this expres-
 sion, *before the World was*, of the new Creation, but do endeavour to avoid
 it another way, which I shall consider by and by.

And a little after, *I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and* v. 8.
they have received them, and known assuredly that I came from thee, and that
thou didst send me.

Again, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we* 1 John 1. 1,
have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled 2.
of the Word of life : for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear
witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life, for so he calls the Son of God,
which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

And that he was not only with God before he assumed humane Nature,
 but also was really God, St. Paul tells us : *Let this mind be in you, which was* Phil. 2. 5, 6,
also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God ἐχ' ἀγαλμὸν ἡῶντο, did 7, 8.
not arrogate to himself to be equal with God, that is, he made no ostentation
 of his Divinity : For this I take to be the true meaning of that Phrase, both
 because it is so used by Plutarch, and because it makes the sense much more
 easie and current, thus, *who being in the form of God, did not assume an equal-
 ity with God,* that is, he did not appear in the Glory of his Divinity, which
 was hid under a Veil of human flesh and infirmity ; *But he emptied himself,
 and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,
 and being found in fashion as a man, or in the habit of a Man, he became obe-
 dient to the death, &c.* So that if his being made in the likeness and fashion of
 a man does signifie that he was really Man by his Incarnation, then surely
 his being in the form of God when he took upon him the fashion and likeness
 of Man and the form of a Servant or Slave, must in all reason signifie that he
 was really God before he became Man : For which reason the same Apostle 1 Tim. 3. 16.
 did not doubt to say, that *God was manifested in the flesh.*

And now I hope that I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of
 St. John's Gospel is not the single and only Text upon which we ground this
 great Doctrine as Socinus calls it, and as we really esteem it to be : For you
 see that I have produced a great many more ; to avoid the dint and force
 whereof the Socinians do chiefly make use of these two Answers.

First, To those Texts which say that *he was in Heaven and came down
 from Heaven,* they give this answer ; That our Saviour some time before his
 entrance upon his publick Ministry, they cannot agree precisely *when*, was ta-
 ken up into Heaven, and then and there had the Will of God reveal'd to him,
 and was sent down from Heaven again to make it known to the World.

This is so very arbitrary and precarious a Supposition that I must confess
 my self not a little out of countenance for them, that Men of so much Wit
 and Reason should ever be put to so sorry and pitiful a shift. For can any
 Man imagine, that in so exact a History of our Saviour's Life, written by se-
 veral Persons, the Relation of so important a matter as this, and of the cir-
 cumstances of it, should be wholly omitted ? That we should have a parti-
 cular account of his being carried into Egypt in his infancy, and of the time
 when he was brought back from thence : Of his disputing in the Temple
 with the Jewish Doctors, and putting them to silence, when he was but
 twelve years of Age : A punctual Relation of his being baptized by John ;
 and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of*
 the

the Devil, and was carried by that *evil Spirit* from one place to another: But not one word of his being taken up by God into Heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the least intimation given either of the time or any other circumstance of so memorable a thing, upon which, according to the *Socinians*, the Authority of his Mission and the Divinity of his Doctrine did so much depend: When so many things of so much less moment, are so minutely and exactly reported, what can be the reason of this deep silence in all the *Evangelists* concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondred that St. *John*, who wrote his *Gospel* last, and as *Eusebius* tells us on purpose to supply the omissions of the other *Evangelists*, should give no account of this thing, and yet, as the *Socinians* suppose, should so often take it for granted and refer to it; as when it is said that *he came forth from God*, and was *sent from God*, and *came down* from Heaven, besides several other Expressions to this purpose.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reasonable to suppose such a thing? And this without any ground from the History of the *Gospel*, only to serve an *Hypothesis* which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unless they may have leave to make a Supposition for which they have nothing in truth to say, but only that it is necessary to defend an Opinion which they are resolv'd not to part with upon any terms.

This is so inartificial, not to say absurd a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is necessary to that purpose, that no man of common ingenuity would make use of it: And there is no surer sign that a Cause is greatly distress'd than to be driven to such a shift. For do but give a Man leave to suppose what he pleases and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Besides, that according to this device the Son of God did not first come from Heaven into the World, as the *Scripture* seems every where to say, but first was in the World, and then went to Heaven, and from thence came back into the World again: And he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was first in the World and afterwards with God; whereas St. *John* says, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made flesh and dwelt among us*: But they say, that he first *was made flesh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God*: A supposition which is quite contrary to all the *Texts* which I have mentioned.

Nor do the several parts of this Interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, say they, when the *Gospel* first began to be publish'd, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning*, *he was with God*, that is, in Heaven to receive from God that Doctrine which he was to deliver to the World: But if by *the beginning* be meant the first publication of the *Gospel*, he was not *then* with God, but had been with him and was come back from him before he entred upon his publick Ministry, which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning*: And *in the beginning he was God*, that is, say they, not God by Nature but by Office and Divine Constitution: And yet in this again they fall foul upon themselves, for they say he was not declared to be God till after his Resurrection and his being advanced to the right hand of God: So that he was not God in their sense of *the beginning*, that is, when he entred upon his publick Ministry and began to preach the *Gospel*.

Secondly, As to some other *Texts* which speak of his existence before his Incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the World was*, and *before Abraham was, I am*: These they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the World was*, and that he was before *Abraham*

was

was, viz. in the Divine foreknowledge and Decree: But then surely they do not consider that this is nothing but what might have been said of any other Man and even of *Abraham* himself, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual existence, he was in the Purpose and Decree of God, that is, before he was, God did intend he should be: Which is a sense so very flat, that I can hardly abstain from saying it is ridiculous. For certainly our *Saviour* did intend by saying this of himself to give himself some preference and advantage above *Abraham*, which this Sense and Interpretation does not in the least do: Because of any other Man, as well as of our *B. Saviour*, it may as truly be said, that he was in the Foreknowledge and Decree of God before *Abraham* was born.

And I cannot but observe further, that our *Saviour* does not say, before *Abraham* was, I was; but *before Abraham was, I AM*: Which is the proper Name of God, whereby is signified the eternal duration and permanency of his Being: In which sense he is said by the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* to be *the* Heb. 13. 8. *same yesterday to day, and for ever*; And so likewise he describes himself in *St. John's* Vision, *I am α and ω , the beginning and the ending, saith the* Rev. 1. 8. *Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*: And that this is spoken of the *Son* you may see in the same *Chapter*, where he says of himself, *I am the first and the last*: And so likewise he describes himself a-v. 17. *again, I am α and ω , the beginning and the end, the first and the last*: And Rev. 22. 13. that we may not doubt who it is that thus describes his own *Eternity*, he continuing still to speak in the same Person says, *I Jesus have sent mine* v. 16. *Angel, &c.* After this I shall only observe, that all these Expressions are the common Description which the Scripture gives of the *Eternity* of God, whose Being is commensurate to all the several respects of *Duration, past, present, and to come*: Besides that the Attribute of *Almighty* is also a part of this Description, which is so peculiar a Property of God, I mean of *Him* who is *God by Nature*, that the Scripture never gives it to any other.

II. I shall in the next place produce those *Texts* which do expressly affirm that *the World and all Creatures whatsoever were made by him*: And this will not only infer his Existence before his Incarnation, but from all *Eternity*.

And for this, besides this *Passage* of *St. John*, we have the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* most express, who says, that *by him God made the Worlds*: And Heb. 1. 2. *St. Paul* likewise says the same more fully and particularly, calling *Jesus* Coloss. 1. 15, *Christ, who was the Son of God, the first-born of every Creature, that is, as I* 16. *have shewn in my former Discourse, the Heir and Lord of the whole Creation*: For by him, says he, *were all things Created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; Whether they be Thrones or Dominions, Principalities or Powers, for so he calls the several Orders of Angels: all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things*: Or, as he is described in *St. John's* Vision, *he is the beginning of the Creation of God, that is, the Principle and Efficient Cause of the Creation*; or else, he was when all things began to be made, and therefore must be before any thing was created, and for that reason could not be a Creature himself; and consequently, must of necessity have been from all *Eternity*.

Now these *Texts* must necessarily be understood of the *old Creation* and of the *natural World*, and not of the *moral World*, and the *Renovation* and *Reformation* of the Minds and Manners of Men by the *Gospel*: For that was only the *World* here below which was reform'd by him, and not things in *Heaven*;

Heaven; not the *invisible* World, not the several Orders of good Angels, which kept their first station, and have no need to be reform'd and made anew: Nor the Devil and his evil Angels; for though since the preaching of the Gospel they have been under greater restraint and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reform'd, but are Devils still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to Mankind that God will suffer them to do.

So that these Texts seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves, but they appear to be much more convincing when we consider the groundless Interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any Man that seriously attends to the perpetual Style and Phrase of the *New Testament*, and to the plain scope and drift of the *Apostle's* reasoning in these Texts, be induc'd to believe that when St. Paul tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers*: I say, can any Man of good sense persuade himself that by all this the *Apostle* means no more than the moral Renovation of the *World here below*, and the Reformation of Mankind by *Jesus Christ*, and his Gospel which was preach'd unto them?

But there is yet one Text more to this purpose, which I have reserv'd to the last place; because I find *Schlinckingius* and *Crellius*, in their joint Comment upon it, to be put to their last shifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, at the beginning of it; where the *Apostle* thus describes the *Son of God*; God, says he, *hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds*: From whence he argues the excellency of the Gospel above the Law: For the Law was given by Angels, but the Gospel by the *Son of God*; whose preheminance above the Angels he shews at large in the two first Chapters of this *Epistle*.

And to this end he proves the two parts of the Description which had been given of him; namely, that God had constituted him heir of all things, and that by Him he made the Worlds.

First, That God had constituted him heir of all things, which is no where said of the Angels: But of him it is said that was made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they. The Angels are only called God's Ministers, for which the *Apostle* cites the words of the *Psalmist*; but to Christ he gives the Title of his Son, and his first-begotten, by virtue whereof he is heir of all things: For to which of the Angels, said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And this I will agree with them to be spoken of Christ with respect to his Resurrection, by which, as St. Paul tells us, he was powerfully declared to be the Son of God. This is the first Prerogative of Christ above the Angels: But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

Secondly, That he had not only the Title of God given him; but that he was truly and really God, because he made the World. That the Title of God was given him he proves by a citation out of the *Psalmist*, But unto the Son he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever, &c. And that he was truly and really God because he made the World, he proves by a citation out of another Psalm, where it is said of him, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish, &c.

Let us now see how Schlictingius and Crellius interpret this Text cited out of the Psalmist by the Apostle as spoken of Christ. They say, * that the Author of this Epistle could not have referr'd to Christ the former words, of this Citation, which speak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, unless he had taken it for granted, that Christ is the most high God; especially if they be understood, as they must necessarily be by those who take this for granted, to be spoken in the first place and directly to, or concerning, Christ: For since all the words of the Psalm are manifestly spoken of the most High God, but that Christ is that God is not signified, no not so much as by one word in that Psalm, it is necessary, that if you will have these words to be directed to Christ, you must take it for granted that Christ is that most High God of whom the Psalmist there speaks.

* Ne referte quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræq; creatione loquentia, ad Christum potuissent Autor, nisi pro concessio sumisset Christum esse summum illum Deum, cœli & terræ Creatorem; præsertim si ea, ut necesse foret, primò & directè ad Christum dicta esse censeas. Nam cum omnia Psalmi verba manifestè de Deo loquuntur, Christum autem Deum illum esse ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc Psalmo indicetur; necesse est ut si verba illa ad Christum directà esse velis, pro concessio sumas, Christum esse Deum illum summum de quo in Psalmo sermo est.

Now we will join issue with these Interpreters upon this Concession, viz. that the Author of this Epistle could not have referr'd these words, which speak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, to Christ, without taking it for granted, that Christ is truly that God who made the World. And if the Author of this Epistle does affirm these words of the Psalmist to be spoken of Christ, then they must acknowledge Christ to be the true God who made Heaven and Earth: But the Author of this Epistle does as evidently affirm these words to be spoken to or of Christ, as he does the words of any other Text cited in this Chapter: And for this I appeal to the common sense of every Man that reads them.

These Interpreters indeed are contented that the latter part of this Citation should be spoken of Christ, but not the former: But why not the former as well as the latter? when they have so expressly told us, that all the words of this Psalm are manifestly spoken of God. What is the Mystery of this? Could they not as easily have interpreted the former part which speaks of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, concerning the moral World, and the new Creation or Reformation of Mankind by Jesus Christ and his Gospel, as well as so many other plain Texts to the same purpose? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have set as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? it was for a Reason which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be guessed at; namely, that if they had admitted the former words to have been spoken of Christ, they knew not what to do with the latter part of this Citation; *They shall perish, but thou remainest, they shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* What shall perish, and wax old, and be changed? Why, the Earth and the Heavens which the Son had made; that is, the moral World, the Reformation of Mankind, and the new Creation of things by the Gospel: All these must have undergone the same fate with the natural World, and must not only have been defaced, but utterly destroy'd and brought to nothing. This they would not say, but they did see it, though they would not seem to see it: And we may plainly see by this, that they can interpret a Text right when necessity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their Cause avoid it: But when Men have once resolv'd to hold fast an Opinion they have taken up, it then becomes not only convenient but necessary to understand nothing that makes against it: And this is truly the present case. But in the mean time where is ingenuity and love of Truth?

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And thus I have with all the clearness and brevity I could, search'd to the very foundations of this new Interpretation of this *Passage* of the *Evangelist*, upon which the *Divinity* of the *Son of God* is so firmly establish'd; and likewise of the gross Misinterpretations of several other *Texts* to the same purpose in this *Evangelist*, and in other *Books* of the *New Testament*: All which Interpretations I have endeavour'd to shew to be not only contrary to the sense of all *Antiquity*, of which, as *Socinus* had but little knowledge, so he seems to have made but little account; but to be also evidently contrary to the perpetual tenour and style of the *H. Scripture*.

Before I go off from this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our *Adversaries* in this Cause do perpetually glory as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this *Point* of the *Divinity* of the *Son of God*, and consequently, that other *Point* of the *B. Trinity*: namely that they have Reason clearly on *their* Side in this *Controversie*, and that the Difficulties and Absurdities are much greater and plainer on *our* part than on *theirs*.

Here they are pleas'd to triumph without modesty, and without measure: And yet notwithstanding this, I am not afraid here likewise to join issue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair Trial at the Bar of Reason, as well as of Scripture, expounded by the general Tradition of the *Christian Church*: I say, by general Tradition, which next to Scripture is the best and surest confirmation of this great Point now in question between us, and that which gives us the greatest and truest light for the right understanding of the true sense and meaning of Scripture, not only in this, but in most other important Doctrines of the *Christian Religion*.

I am not without some good hopes, I will not say, confidence, for I never thought that to be so great an advantage to any Cause as some Men would be glad to make others believe it is; hoping to help and support a weak Argument by a strong and mighty Confidence: But surely Modesty never hurt any Cause, and the Confidence of Man seems to me to be much like the Wrath of Man, which St. James tells us, *worketh not the righteousness of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never serves any wise and real purpose of Religion.

I say, I am not without some good hopes, that I have in the foregoing Discourses clearly shewn, that the tenour of Scripture and general Tradition are on our Side in this Argument, and therefore I shall not need to give my self the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now as to the Point of Reason, the great Difficulty and Absurdity, which they object to our Doctrine concerning this Mystery, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above Reason, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above Reason, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this I think will bear no great Dispute: Because, if they would be pleas'd to speak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our Reason is not able fully to comprehend it: But what then? Are there no Mysteries in Religion? That I am sure they will not say, because God, whose infinite Nature and Perfections are the very Foundation of all Religion, is certainly the greatest Mystery of all other, and the most incomprehensible: But we must not, nay they will not for this reason deny, that there is such a Being as God. And therefore if there be Mysteries in Religion, it is no reasonable Objection against them that we cannot fully comprehend them: Because all Mysteries in what kind soever, whether in Religion or in Nature, so long, and so far as they are Mysteries, are for that very reason incomprehensible.

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But they urge the matter much farther, that *this* particular *Mystery* now under debate is plainly contrary to *Reason*: And if they can make this good, I will confess that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good against us they must clearly shew some plain *Contradiction* in this *Doctrine*, which I could never yet see done by any. Great *Difficulty* I acknowledge there is in the *Explication* of it, in which the further we go, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal to us in *Scripture* concerning it, the more we are entangled, and that which Men are pleased to call an *explaining* of it, does in my apprehension often make it more obscure; that is, less plain than it was before; which does not so very well agree with a pretence of *Explication*.

Here then I fix my foot: That there are *three* Differences in the *Deity*, which the *Scripture* speaks of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, and every where speaks of them as we use to do of *three* distinct *Persons*: And therefore I see no reason why in this Argument we should nicely abstain from using the word *Person*; though I remember that St. *Jerome* does somewhere desire to be excused from it.

Now concerning these *Three* I might in the first place urge that plain and expresse *Text*, *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the H. Ghost; and these three are one*: But upon this I will not now insist, because it is pretended that in some *Copies* of greatest antiquity this *Verse* is omitted; the contrary whereof is I think capable of being made out very clearly: But this matter would be too long to be debated at present.

1 Joh: 5.7.

However that be, thus much is certain and cannot be denied, that our *Saviour* commanded his *Apostles* to baptize all *Nations* in the *Name* of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*: And that the *Apostles* in their *Epistles* do in their most usual form of *Benediction* join these *Three* together: And it is yet further certain, that not only the *Name* and *Title* of *God*, but the most *incommunicable Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Deity*, are in *Scripture* frequently ascribed to the *Son* and the *H. Ghost*; one *Property* only excepted, which is peculiar to the *Father* as he is the *Principle* and *Fountain* of the *Deity*, that he is of *himself* and of no other; which is not, nor can be said of the *Son* and *H. Ghost*.

Now let any Man shew any plain and downright *Contradiction* in all this; or any other *Difficulty* besides this, that the particular manner of the existence of these three *Differences* or *Persons* in the *Divine Nature*, expresse'd in *Scripture* by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, is *incomprehensible* by our *finite Understandings*, and *inexplicable* by us: In which I do not see what *Absurdity* there is, since our *Adversaries* cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whose existence we can neither comprehend, nor explain.

Let us now see, whether the *Opinion* of our *Adversaries* hath not greater *Difficulties* in it, and more palpable *Absurdities* following from it. They say, that the *Son of God* is a mere *Creature*; not *God by Nature*, and yet truly and really *God by Office* and by *Divine appointment* and constitution; to whom the very same *Honour* and *Worship* is to be given which we give to *Him* who is *God by Nature*.

And can they discern no *Difficulty*, no *Absurdity* in this? What? no *absurdity* in bringing *Idolatry* by a back-door into the *Christian Religion*, one main *Design* whereof was to banish *Idolatry* out of the *World*? And will they in good earnest contest this matter with us, that the giving *Divine Worship* to a mere *Creature* is not *Idolatry*? And can they vindicate themselves in this

Point any other way, than what will in a great measure acquit both the *Pagans* and the *Papists* from the charge of *Idolatry*?

What? no *Absurdity* in a *God* as it were *but of yesterday*? in a *Creature God*, in a *God* merely by *positive Institution*; and this in opposition to a plain *moral Precept* of eternal obligation, and to the fix'd and immutable *Nature* and *Reason* of things?

So that to avoid the *shadow* and appearance of a *Plurality* of *Deities* they run really into it, and for any thing I can see, into downright *Idolatry*, by *worshipping a Creature besides the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*

Rom. I. 25. They can by no means allow *two Gods* by *Nature*; no more can we: But they can willingly admit of *two Gods*; the *one* by *Nature*, and the *other* by *Office*, to whom they are content to pay the same *Honour* which is due to *Him* who is *God* by *Nature*. Provided *Christ* will be contented to be but a *Creature*, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in *Reason* is fit.

And do they see no *Absurdity* in all this? nothing that is contrary to *Reason* and *good sense*? nothing that feels like *Inconsistency* and *Contradiction*? Do they consider how often *God* hath declar'd that *he will not give his glory to another*? And that the *Apostle* describes *Idolatry* to be, the giving *service*, or *worship*, to things *which by Nature are no Gods*?

Gal. 4. 8. Surely if *Reason* guided by *Divine Revelation* were to chuse a *God*, it would make choice of one who is declared in *Scripture* to be *the only begotten of the Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the same yesterday, to day and for ever*: much rather than a *mere Creature*, who did not begin to be till about *seventeen hundred years* ago.

I only propose these things, without any artificial aggravation, to their most serious and impartial consideration; after which I cannot think that these great *Masters of Reason* can think it so easie a matter to extricate themselves out of these *Difficulties*. The *God of Truth* lead us into all *Truth*, and enlighten the *Minds* of those who are in *Error*, and give them *Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth*: For his sake who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*.

And thus much may suffice to have said upon this *Argument*, which I am sensible is mere *Controversie*: A thing which I seldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my *Text*, which is so very proper for this *Season* hath almost necessarily engaged me in it: Besides, that I think it a *Point* of that concernment, that all *Christians* ought to be well instructed in it. And I have chosen rather once for all to handle it fully and to go to the bottom of it, than in every *Sermon* to be flurting at it, without saying any thing to the purpose against it: A way which in my opinion is neither proper to establish Men in the *Truth* nor to convince them of their *Error*.

I shall only at present make this short *Reflection* upon the whole: That we ought to treat the *Holy Scriptures* as the *Oracles of God*, with all reverence and submission of *Mind* to the *Doctrine* therein revealed: And to interpret them with that candour and simplicity which is due to the sincere *Declarations of God* intended for the instruction and not for the deception and delusion of Men: I say, we should treat them as the *Oracles of God*, and not like the *doubtful Oracles of the Heathen Deities*, that is, in truth of the *Devil*; which were contrived and calculated on purpose to deceive, containing and for the most part intending a sense directly contrary to the appearing and most obvious meaning of the *Words*: For the *Devil* was the first *Author of Equivocation*; though the *Jesuits* have since made it a lawful way of

of lying, which *their Father*, of whom they learn'd it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deserves likewise to be very well considered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the Exceptions of the Church of *Rome* against the *H. Scriptures*, being a sufficient and certain Rule of Faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plainest *Texts* imaginable for the establishing of Doctrines of greatest moment in the *Christian Religion*, by their remote and wrested interpretation of them: Which way of dealing with them seems to be really more contumelious to those *H. Oracles*, than the downright rejecting of their Authority: Because this is a fair and open way of attacking them, whereas the other is an insidious, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earnest believe the Divine Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, let us take all our Doctrines and Opinions from those clear Fountains of Truth, not disturb'd and darkned by searching anxiously into all the possible Senses that the several words and expressions of *Scripture* can bear, and by forcing that sense upon them which is most remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and passing by that sense which is most obvious and easie to the common apprehension of any unbiass'd and impartial Reader. This is to use the *H. Scriptures* as the Church of *Rome* have done many Holy and good Men whom they are pleased to brand with the odious Name of *Hereticks*, to torture them till they speak the Mind of their Tormenters though never so contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole Discourse with a *Saying* which I heard from a great and judicious Man, *Non amo nimis argutam Theologiam; I love no Doctrines in Divinity which stand so very much upon quirk and subtilty.*

And I cannot upon this occasion forbear to say, that those Doctrines of Religion and those Interpretations of *Scripture* have ever been to me the most suspected, which need abundance of Wit and a great many *Criticisms* to make them out: And considering the Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God, I cannot possibly believe but that all things necessary to be believ'd and practis'd by *Christians* in order to their eternal Salvation are plainly contain'd in the *H. Scriptures*: God surely hath not dealt so hardly with Mankind as to make any thing necessary to be believ'd or practis'd by us which he hath not made sufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it should be impossible for any Man to be saved and to get to Heaven without a great deal of Learning to direct and carry him thither when the far greatest part of Mankind have no learning at all. It was well said by *Erasmus*, *That it was never well with the Christian World since it began to be a matter of so much Subtilty and Wit for a Man to be a true Christian.*

SERMON XLV.

Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the
Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 21. 1680.

JOHN I. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

TH E laſt Year about this time, and upon the ſame Occaſion of the Annual Commemoration of the *Incarnation* and *Nativity* of our *B. Lord and Saviour*, I began to diſcourſe to you upon theſe Words: In which I told you were contained *three* great Points concerning our *Saviour*, the Author and Founder of our *Religion*.

First, His *Incarnation*; *the Word was made*, or became *flesh*.

Secondly, His *Life* and *Converſation* here among us; and *dwelt among us*, *ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν*, he pitched his *Tabernacle* among us, he lived here below in this World, and for ſome time made his reſidence and abode with us.

Thirdly, That in this ſtate of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity: Whiſt he appear'd as a Man and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious Teſtimonies given of Him, that he was the Son of God; and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no Creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the firſt of theſe, namely, his, *Incarnation*, *the Word was made flesh*: For the full and clear explication of which words I propoſed to conſider theſe *two* things:

- I. I. The *Perſon* here ſpoken of, and who it is that is here ſaid to be Incarnate, or made *flesh*, namely, *the Word*. And this I have handled at large in my two former *Diſcourſes* upon this *Text*. I ſhall now proceed in the
- II. II. *Second* place to give ſome account of the nature and manner of this *Incarnation*, ſo far as the *Scripture* hath thought fit to reveal and declare this *Mystery* to us. *The Word was made flesh*, that is, He who is perſonally called the *Word*, and whom the *Evangelist* hath ſo fully and clearly deſcribed in the beginning of his *Gospel*, he became *flesh*; that is, assumed our Nature and became *Man*, for ſo the word *flesh* is frequently uſed in *Scripture*, for *Man* or *Humane Nature*.

So that by the *Word's* becoming *flesh*, that is, *Man*, the *Evangelist* did not only intend to expreſs to us that he assumed a humane *Body* without a *Soul*, but that he became a perfect *Man*, conſiſting of *Soul* and *Body* united. It is very probable indeed that the *Evangelist* did purpoſely chuſe the word *flesh*, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of Humanity, to denote to us the great condeſcenſion of the *Son of God* in assuming our Nature with all its *Infirmities*, and becoming ſubject to frailty and mortality for our ſake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this *Propoſition*, the *Word was made flesh*.

flesh, I shall in a further prosecution of this Argument take into consideration these *three* things.

First, I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be suppos'd to be implied in this expression of the *Word's being made flesh*.

Secondly, I shall consider the *Objections* which are commonly brought against this *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* from the seeming impossibility, or incongruity of the thing.

Thirdly, And because, after all that can be said in answer to those *Objections*, it may still appear to us very strange that God who could without all this circumstance, and condescension even almost beneath the Majesty of the Great God, at least as we are apt to think, have given Laws to Mankind, and have offer'd forgiveness of Sins and eternal life upon their Repentance for sins past, and sincere though imperfect obedience for the future; I say, it may seem strange, that notwithstanding this God should yet make choice of this way and method of our Salvation: I shall therefore in the last place endeavour to give some probable account of this strange and wonderful Dispensation, and shew that it was done in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of Mankind; and that when it is thoroughly consider'd it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage than any other way which the wisdom of this World would have been apt to devise and pitch upon. And in all this I shall all along take either the plain declarations of *Scripture*, or the pregnant intimations of it for my ground and guide.

I. I shall consider more distinctly *what may reasonably be supposed to be implied in this expression of the Word's being made flesh*; namely, these *five* things.

First, The *truth and reality of the thing*: That the Son of God did not only appear in the form of human flesh, but did really assume it: *the Word was made flesh*, as the *Evangelist* expressly declares: For if this had been only a *Phantasm* and *Apparition*, as some Hereticks of old did fanfie, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of *Angels* mentioned in the *old Testament*, sudden and of short continuance, and would after a little while have vanish'd and disappear'd. But *he dwelt among us*, and convers'd familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together; and the *Scripture* useth all the expressions which are proper to signify a real Man, and a real *Humane Body*, and there were all the signs and evidences of reality that could be. For the *Word* is said to be made *flesh*, and Christ is said to be *of the seed of David according to the flesh*, and to be *made of a Woman*; and all this to shew that he was a real *Man*, and had a real and substantial *Body*: For he was born, and by degrees grew up to be a *Man*, and did perform all such actions as are natural and proper to Men: He continued a great while in the World, and at last suffer'd and dy'd, and was laid in the Grave; He did not vanish and disappear like a *Phantasm* or *Spirit*, but he dy'd like other Men: And his Body was rais'd again out of the Grave; and after he was risen, he conversed forty days upon Earth, and permitted his Body to be handled; and last of all was visibly taken up into Heaven.

So that either we must grant Him to have had a real Body, or we have cause to doubt whether all Mankind be not meer *Phantasms* and *Apparitions*: For greater evidence no Man can give that he is really cloathed with and carries about him a true and substantial Body, than the *Son of God* did in the days of his *flesh*. It is to me very wonderful upon what ground, or indeed to what end, the *Hereticks* of old, *Marcion* and others, did deny the reality of *Christ's* flesh. Surely they had a great mind to be *Hereticks* who took up so senseless an *Opinion* for no reason, and to no purpose.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another thing implied in the *Word's being made flesh*, is that *this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of Men*, The *Word was made flesh*, that is, became *Man*; for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be often used in *Scripture*. And this the *Author* of the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* takes very special notice of as a great grace and favour of God to Mankind, that his *Son* appear'd in our Nature, and consequently for our Salvation; as it is said in the *Nicene Creed*, *who for us Men and for our Salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate*, &c. For verily, says the *Apostle*, *He took not on him the nature of Angels, but of the seed of Abraham*, & ὃν δὲ πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐπιλαμβάνεταί, *he did not assume the Angelical Nature*, so our *Translators* understood the phrase; but the word also signifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *assume* or *take on him*: He did not take hold of the *Angels* when they were falling, but suffered them to lapse irrecoverably into misery and ruine: but he took hold of *Humane Nature* when it was falling, and particularly of the *Seed of Abraham*; and by the *Seed of Abraham*, that is, by himself in whom all the *Nations of the Earth* were blessed, he brought Salvation first to the *Jews*, and then to the rest of Mankind. The *Apostle* chuses to derive this *Blessing* from *Abraham*, that so he might bring it nearer to the *Jews* to whom he wrote this *Epistle*, and might thereby more effectually recommend the *Gospel* to them, and the glad tidings of that great *Salvation* in which they had so peculiar an Interest.

And it is some confirmation of the Interpretation I have given of that expression *he took not on him*, &c. that the *Evangelist* uses the very same word for taking hold of one that was ready to sink: For so it is said of *St. Peter* when he was ready to sink, that *Christ* put forth his hand, καὶ ἐπιλάβετο, *and caught hold of him*, and saved him from drowning: And thus the *Son of God* caught hold of Mankind which was ready to sink into eternal perdition: He laid hold of our Nature, or as it is express'd in the same *Chapter*, *he took part of flesh and blood*, that in our Nature he might be capable of effecting our Redemption and Deliverance.

But it is no where said in *Scripture*, not the least intimation given there, that the *Son of God* ever shew'd such grace and favour to the *Angels*: But the *Word became flesh*; that is became *Man*: He did not assume the *Angelical* Nature, but was contented to be cloathed with the *Rags of Humanity* and to be made in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, that is, of *sinful Man*.

Thirdly, This expression of the *Word's being made flesh* may further imply his assuming the infirmities, and submitting to the miseries of *Human Nature*. This I collect from the word *flesh*, by which the *Scripture* often useth to express our frail and mortal Nature. The *Son of God* did not only condescend to be made *Man*, but also to become mortal and miserable for our sakes: He submitted to all those things which are accounted most grievous and calamitous to human nature: To hunger and want, to shame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a most cruel and disgraceful death: So that in this sense also he became *flesh*, not only by being cloathed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and sufferings of it; of which he had a greater share than any of the *Sons of Men* ever had: for never was sorrow like to his sorrow, nor sufferings like to his sufferings, the weight and bitterness whereof was such as to wring from him, the meekest and most patient endurer of sufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Fourthly, In this expression, *the Word was made flesh*, is likewise imply'd the *Union of the Divinity with Human Nature in one Person*. And this the *Text* expresseth in such words as seem to signify a most perfect, and intimate,

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and vital Union of the *Divine* and *humane* Natures of *Christ* in one *Person*: *The Word was made*, or became, *flesh*: Which what else can it signifie but one of these two things? Either that the *Eternal Word* and *only begotten Son of God* was changed into a *Man*, which is not only impossible to be but impious to imagine: Or else, that the *Son of God* did assume our *Nature* and became *Man* by his *Divinity*, being united to *humane Nature* as the *Soul* is vitally united to the *Body*; without either being changed into it, or confounded with it or swallowed up by it, as the *Entychian Hereticks* fancied the *humane Nature of Christ* to be swallowed up of his *Divinity*: Which had it been so *St. John* had expressed himself very untowardly when he says, *The Word, became flesh*; for it had been quite contrary, and *flesh had become the Word*, being changed into it, and swallowed up by it, and lost in it.

The only thing then that we can reasonably imagine to be the meaning of this expression is this, that the *Son of God* assumed *our Nature*, and united himself with it, as our *Souls* are united with our *Bodies*: And as the *Soul* and *Body* united make one *Person*: and yet retain their distinct *Natures* and *Properties*; so may we conceive the *Divine* and *humane* Natures in *Christ* to be united into one *Person*: And this without any change or confusion of the two *Natures*.

I say, the *Divinity* united it self with *humane Nature*: For though *flesh* be only mentioned in the *Text*, yet he did not only assume a *humane Body*, which was the *Heretic of Apollinaris* and his Followers, upon a mistake of *this* and some other *Texts of Scripture*: but he assumed the *whole humane Nature*; that is, a human *Soul* united to a real and natural *Body*: for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be frequently used in *Scripture*, not only for the *Body* but for the *whole Man*, by an usual Figure of speech: As on the other hand, *Soul* is frequently used for the *whole Man* or *Person*: So many *Souls* are said to have gone down with *Jacob* into *Egypt*, that is, so many *Persons*.

But this I need not insist longer upon, our *Saviour* being so frequently in *Scripture*, and so expressly said to be a *Man*; which could with no propriety of speech have been said, had he only assumed a *humane Body*: Nor could he have been said to have been *made in all things like unto us*; *sin only excepted*, had he only had a *humane Body* but not a *Soul*: For then the meaning must have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*; that is, like to a *Man*, that only excepted which chiefly makes the *Man*; that is, the *Soul*: And the addition of those words, *Sin only excepted*, had been no less strange; because a *humane Body*, without a *Soul*, is neither capable of being said to have *Sin*, or to be without it.

And this may suffice to have been spoken in general concerning that great *Mystery of the Hypostatical*, as they that love hard words love to call it, or *Personal Union of the Divine and humane Natures in the Person of our B. Saviour*. In the more particular explication whereof it is not safe for our shallow understandings to wade further than the *Scripture* goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth and lose our selves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this present state of darkness and imperfection to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It ought to be thought sufficient that the *Scripture* speaking of the same *Person*, *Jesus Christ* our *B. Saviour*: doth frequently and expressly call him both *God* and *Man*: Which how it can be so easily conceived upon any other Supposition than that of the Union of the *Divine* and *humane Natures in one Person*, I must confess that I am not able to comprehend.

Fifthly and lastly, All this which I have shewn to be implied in this Proposition, the word was made *flesh*, does signifie to us the wonderful and
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amazing condescension and love of God to Mankind in sending his *Son* into the World, and submitting him to this way and method for our Salvation and recovery. *The Word was made flesh*, What a step is here made in order to the reconciling of Men to God? From *Heaven to Earth*; from the top of Glory and Majesty to the lowest gulf of meanness and misery: The *Evangelist* seems here to use the word *flesh*, which signifies the meanest and vilest part of Humanity, to express to us how low the *Son of God* was contented to stoop for the Redemption of *Man*. *The Word was made flesh*: Two terms at the greatest distance from one another, are here brought together: The *Son of God* is here expressed to us by one of his highest and most glorious Titles, the *Word*, which imports both *Power* and *Wisdom*; *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*, as the *Apostle* calls him: And *humane Nature* is here described by its vilest part, *flesh*; which imports frailty and infirmity: *The Word became flesh*, that is submitted to that from which it was at the greatest distance: He who was the *Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*, submitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miserable *Man*; not only to assume our Nature, but to put on all the Infirmities, and which is the greatest of all, the *Mortality* of it.

I Cor. I.
24.

And this is the great *Mystery of godliness*, that is, of the *Christian Religion*, that *God* should be *manifested in the flesh*, and become *Man*, with a most gracious and merciful design to bring *Man* back again to *God*: That he should become a miserable and a mortal *Man* to save us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of everlasting life: That the *Son of God* should condescend to inhabit our vile Nature, to wear *Rags* and to become a *Beggar* for our sakes; and all this not only to repair those dismal Ruins which *Sin* had made in it, and to restore us to our former estate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees, to bring us to a state of much greater perfection and happiness than that from which we fell.

And that he should become *Man* on purpose that he might dwell among us, and converse with us, and thoroughly instruct us in our Duty, and shew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly Doctrine, and as it were take us by the hand and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar Example of a most blameless and holy life; shewing us how *God himself* thought fit to live in this World, when he was pleased to become *Man*.

That by conversing with us in the likeness and nature of *Man*, he might become a *humane*, and in some sort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging Example of innocence and goodness, of meekness and humility, of patience and submission to the Will of *God* under the sorest afflictions and sufferings, and in a word, a most perfect Pattern of a Divine and Heavenly conversation upon Earth.

And that by this means we might for our greater encouragement in holiness and vertue, see all that which the Law of *God* requires of us exemplified in our Nature, and really performed and practised by a *Man* like ourselves.

And that likewise in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the two great Enemies of our Salvation, the *World* and the *Devil*: And by first suffering *Death*, and then overcoming it, and by rescuing our nature from the power of it by his Resurrection from the dead, he might deliver us from the fear of *Death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a blessed *Immortality*: For by assuming our frail and mortal Nature he became capable of suffering and of shedding his precious Blood for us, and by that means of purchasing forgiveness of sins and eternal Redemption for us.

And

And further yet, that by being subject to the Miseries and Infirmities of Humanity, he might from his own Experience, the surest and most sensible sort of knowledge and instruction, learn to have a more compassionate sense of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiserate us in all our sufferings and temptations, and more ready to succour us labouring under them.

And finally that as a Reward of his obedience and sufferings in our Nature, he might in the same Nature be exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, there to continue for ever to make intercession for us.

II. I shall in the next place consider the *Objections* against the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, from the supposed *impossibility* and incongruity of the thing. I shall mention *three*, and endeavour in as few words as I can to give a clear and satisfactory *Answer* to them.

First, it is objected, that the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, as I have explained it, necessarily supposing an Union of the *Divinity* with humane Nature is, if not altogether *impossible*, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now that there is no impossibility in the thing seems to be very evident from the Instance whereby I have endeavoured to illustrate it, of the Union between the *Soul* and the *Body* of Man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is; and yet no Man can explain, either to himself or to any one else, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be; but for all that we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so.

And is it not every whit as possible for God, if he so please, to unite himself to humane Nature, as it is for the *Soul* to be united to the *Body*? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reason to be any prejudice against the truth and certainty of the thing: This indeed may make it seem strange to us, but by no means incredible: Because we do most firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whose Being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted Principle which no Man can gainsay, *That to assure us that a thing really is, it is not necessary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be*: It is sufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impossible; and of that we have the very best *Demonstration* that can be, if we be sure that it is.

Secondly, Supposing this thing to be possible, and capable in any measure to be understood, which yet I have shewn not to be necessary to our firm belief of it: It is further objected, that it seems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the Dignity of the *Son of God*, to be united to humane Nature, and to submit to so near Alliance with that which is so very mean and despicable: Yea to be infinitely more below Him, than for the greatest Prince in this World to match with the poorest and most contemptible Beggar.

But herein surely we measure God too much by our selves, and because we who are evil have seldom so much goodness as to stoop beneath our selves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not so much goodness neither: And because our ill nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not suffer us to do it, we presently conclude that it doth not become God. But what *Pliny* said to the Emperour *Trajan* concerning earthly Kings and Potentates, is much more true of the Lord of Glory, the great King of Heaven and Earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum fastigium superest, hoc uno modo crescere potest, si se ipse submittat, securus magnitudinis sue,*

ſue; He that is at the top, and can riſe no higher, hath yet this one way left to become greater, by ſtooping beneath himſelf; which he may very ſafely do, being ſecure of his own Greatneſs. The lower any Being, be he never ſo high, condeſcends to do good, the glory of his Goodneſs ſhines ſo much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and ſtiff to bend, too perverſe, and ill natur'd to ſtoop beneath their own little Greatneſs for the good of others: But God, whoſe ways are not as our ways, and whoſe thoughts are as much above our low and narrow thoughts as the Heavens are high above the Earth, did not diſdain nor think it below him to become Man for the good of Mankind; and as much as the Divinity is capable of being ſo, to become miſerable to make us happy. We may be afraid that if we humble our ſelves we ſhall be deſpiſ'd, that if we ſtoop others will get above us and trample upon us: But God, though he condeſcend never ſo low, is ſtill ſecure of his own Greatneſs, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right Reaſon, it was no real diminution or diſparagement to the Son of God to become Man for the Salvation of Mankind; But on the contrary, it was a moſt glorious Humility, and the greateſt Inſtance of the trueſt Goodneſs that ever was. And therefore the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, when he ſays, that *Chriſt glorified not himſelf to be made an High Prieſt, but was appointed of God to this Office, as was Aaron*; does hereby ſeem to intimate, that it was a glory to the Son of God to be made an High Prieſt for the Sons of Men: For though it was a ſtrange condeſcenſion, yet was it likewise a moſt wonderful Argument of his Goodneſs, which is the higheſt Glory of the Divine Nature.

In ſhort, if God for our ſakes did ſubmit himſelf to a condition which we may think did leſs become him, here is great cauſe of thankfulneſs, but none ſurely of cavil and exception: We have infinite reaſon to acknowledge and admire his Goodneſs, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindneſs, and to quarrel with him for having deſcended ſo much beneath himſelf to teſtify his love to us and his tender concernment for our happineſs: Beſides, that when we have ſaid all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himſelf to be the beſt and moſt competent Judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counſel of any of his Creatures, what will beſt become him in this or any other Caſe: Behold in this thou art not juſt; I will answer thee, that God is greater than man: Why doſt thou diſpute againſt him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

Thirdly, If our Reaſon could get over this difficulty, and admit that God might become Man; yet it ſeems very unfuitable to the Son of God and to his great Deſign of inſtructing and reforming Mankind, to appear in ſo low and ſuffering a condition. This, to the Heathen Philoſophers, who as the Apoſtle tells us, by Wiſdom knew not God, did not only ſeem unreaſonable, but even ridiculous: So St. Paul tells us, We, ſays he, preach Chriſt crucified to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs: To think that ſo poor and mean a Man was fit to give Laws to Mankind, and to awe the Minds of Men by the Authority of his Doctrines: That one who was put to Death himſelf ſhould be believ'd by others when he promiſed to them Life and Immortality in another World, could not but appear very ſtrange and unreaſonable.

For answer to this beſides other excellent Reaſons and Ends which the Scripture expreſſly aſſigns of our B. Saviour's Humiliation, in his aſſuming our Nature with the frailties and miſeries of it. As that he might be a Teacher, and an Example to us: That by his bitter Paſſion he might make Expiation for Sin, and ſet us a pattern of the greateſt meekneſs and patience under the

the greatest provocations and sufferings: That having suffered so grievously himself, he might know how to commiserate and pity us in all our temptations and sufferings: That *by death he might destroy him that had the power of Death; that is, the Devil; and might deliver those who through fear of Death were all their Life time subject to bondage*: I say, besides all this, it was of great use that the great Teacher and Reformer of Mankind should live in so mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the World by this consideration that the Son of God, and the very best Man that ever was, was a Beggar, and had not where to lay his head: And likewise to convince Men of these two great Truths, That God may grievously afflict those whom he dearly loves; and That it is possible for Men to be innocent and contented in the midst of poverty, and reproach, and sufferings.

Had our B. Saviour appeared in the Person and Pomp of a great temporal Prince, the influence of his Authority and Example would probably have made more Hypocrites and servile Converts, but not have persuaded Men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great Arguments that must do that, must not be fetch'd from the Pomp and prosperity of this World, but from the great and eternal Recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our observation, that nothing puzzled *Cesar Vaninus*, who was perhaps the first, and the only Martyr for *Atheism* that ever was; I say, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not from the History of our Saviour's Life and Actions, written by the *Evangelists* with so native a simplicity, fasten upon him any probable imputation of a secular interest and design in any thing that he said or did. No doubt but *Vaninus*, before he made this acknowledgment, had searched very narrowly into this matter; and could he have found any colour for such an Imputation, he would have thought it sufficient to have blasted both Him and his Religion.

You may be pleased to consider further, that it was the Opinion of the wisest Jews, that the best Men, the Children of God, who called God their Father, were many times exposed to the greatest sufferings and reproaches for the trial of their faith, and meekness, and patience, as we may see at large in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, where speaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in saying after this manner; *Let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn; he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressions of our youth: He professeth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the Child of the Lord: He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other mens, his ways are of another fashion: We are esteemed of him as counterfeits, he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: He pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his Father: Let us see if his words be true, and what shall happen in the end of him: For if the just man be the Son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his Enemies: Let God examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience: Let us condemn him to a shameful Death, &c.*

This is so exact a Character of our B. Saviour, both in respect of the holiness and innocency of his Life, and of the reproaches and sufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious Jews, who persecuted him all his life, and at last conspir'd his death, that whoever reads this passage can hardly forbear to think it a Prophetical Description of the innocency and sufferings of the B. Jesus: For He certainly in the most eminent manner was the Son of God, being called by the *Evangelist*, the only begotten of the Father.

Or

Or if this was not a *Prediction* concerning our *B. Saviour*, yet thus much at least may be concluded from it, that in the judgment of the *Wiseſt* among the *Jews*, it was not unworthy of the Goodness and Wiſdom of the Divine Providence to permit the beſt Man to be ſo ill treated by wicked Men: And further, that in their judgment the innocency and virtues of an eminently righteous Man are then ſet off to the beſt advantage, and do ſhine forth with the greateſt luſtre, when he is under the hardeſt circumſtances of ſuffering and perſecution from an evil World.

Add to this likewise, that the beſt and wiſeſt of the *Heathen Philoſophers* do frequently inculcate ſuch Doctrines as theſe: That *Worldly Greatneſs and Power* are not to be admired, but rather to be deſpiſ'd by a wiſe Man. That *Men* may be very good and dear to the Gods, and yet liable to the greateſt miſeries and ſufferings in this World. That whoever ſuffers unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt teſtimony to Goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recommend *Piety and Vertue*, as things of greater value than the eaſe and pleaſure of this preſent Life: Nay further, that a good Man caſt into the hardeſt circumſtances of poverty and miſery, of reproach and ſuffering, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the *Minifter*, and *Apoſtle*, and *Preacher of God* to Mankind; Which are the very words of *Arian* a *Heathen Philoſopher*, in his *Diſcourſes of Epiſtetus*. Now ſurely they who ſay ſuch things have no reaſon to object to our *B. Saviour* his low and ſuffering condition, as miſbecoming one that was to be the great *Teacher* and *Reformer* of the World.

And as to that part of the *Objection*, that he who ſo freely promiſed *Immortality* to others could not, or however did not ſave himſelf from *Death*: This vaniſheth into nothing when we conſider that he reſcued himſelf from the power of the Grave: And it is ſo far from being *ridiculous* to rely upon his Promiſe of raiſing us up from the dead, that the *Objection* it ſelf is really ſo. For can any thing be more reaſonable than to rely upon Him for our hopes of *Immortality*, who by riſing from the Grave himſelf, and by conquering the Powers of *Death* and *Darkneſs*, and triumphing openly over them by his viſible *Ascenſion* into Heaven, hath given ſo plain and ſenſible a Demonſtration to all Mankind that he is able to make good to the uttermoſt all the glorious Promiſes which he hath made to us of a bleſſed *Reſurrection* to eternal Life and Happineſs in another World? To him be glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XLVI.

Concerning the Incarnation of C H R I S T.

Preached in the

Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, December 28. 1680.

J O H N I. 14.

The Word was made flesh.

TH E *third* and last thing which I proposed upon this Argument of the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* was to give some account of this *Dispensation*, and to shew that the Wisdom of God thought fit thus to order things in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of Mankind: And that when all things are duely weigh'd and consider'd, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wisdom of Men would have been most apt to devise and pitch upon. III.

And it is the more necessary to give some account of this matter, because after all that hath hitherto been said in answer to the Objections against it, it may still seem very strange to a considering Man, that God, who could without all this circumstance and condescension have done the business for which his *Son* came into the World and appear'd in our Nature; that is, could have given the same Laws to Mankind, and have offer'd to us the forgiveness of our Sins and eternal Life upon our Repentance for Sins past, and a sincere endeavour of Obedience for the future: I say that notwithstanding this, he should yet make choice of this way for the Redemption and Recovery of fallen Man, by sending his Son in our Nature to accomplish this Design.

And in the handling of this Argument I shall, as I said before, all along take the exprefs declarations, or at least the pregnant intimations of Scripture for my ground and guide, it being always safest to take the Reasons of the Divine counsels and actions from God himself: And in the

First place, I make no manner of doubt to say, that it would be a great presumption and boldness in any Man to affirm, that the infinite Wisdom of God could not have brought about the Salvation of Men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why should we take upon us to set limits to infinite Wisdom, and pretend to know the utmost extent of it? But since God hath been pleased to pitch upon this Way rather than any other, this surely ought to be Reason enough to satisfy us of the peculiar wisdom and fitness of it, whether the particular Reasons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble Argument, and well worthy our consideration, to enquire into the Reasons of this dispensation, and to assign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon *Mysteries* and *Miracles* in Religion to be much of the same nature, and that a great Reverence

rence is due to both where they are certain, and necessary in the Nature and Reason of the thing, but neither of them are easily to be admitted without necessity, and very good evidence.

Secondly, I consider in the next place, that in the several Revelations which God hath made of himself to Mankind, he hath with great condescension accommodated himself, both as to manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumstances of the Persons and People to whom they were made.

Particularly we find that the Dispensation of God towards the *Jewish* Nation was full of condescension to the temper, and prejudices, and other circumstances of that *People*. For the *Religion* and *Laws* which God gave them were far from being the best and most perfect in themselves; in which sense some understand that *Passage* in the Prophet *Ezekiel*, where it is said, that God gave them *Statutes which were not good*; that is, very imperfect in comparison of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet such as were very well suited and fitted to their present capacity and circumstances.

Thirdly, I observe yet further; That though the *Christian* Religion, as to the main and substance of it, be a most perfect Institution, being the *Law of Nature* reviv'd and perfected; yet upon a due consideration of things it cannot be denied that the manner and circumstances of this Dispensation are full of condescension to the weakness of Mankind and very much accommodated to the most common and deeply radicated Prejudices of Men concerning God and Religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the Minds of Men, by substituting something in the place of them of as near a compliance with them as was consistent with the Honour of Almighty God, and the great Design of the *Christian* Religion.

It is not easie to give a certain account of the true *Original* of some *Notions* and *Prejudices* concerning God and Religion which have generally obtained in the World, in that variety of *Religions*, and the different ways of *Worship* and *Superstition* which have been in several *Nations* of the Earth: But in *History* and *Fact* this is certain that some *Notions*, and those very gross and erroneous, did almost universally prevail even among those who did extremely differ in the particular *Forms* and *Modes* of their *Superstition*.

And though some of these were much more tolerable than others, yet God seems to have had great consideration of some very weak and gross apprehensions of Mankind concerning Religion. And as in some of the *Laws* given by *Moses*, God was pleased particularly to consider the *hardness* of the hearts of that *People*; so he seems likewise to have very much suited the Dispensation of the Gospel and the Method of our Salvation, by the *Incarnation* and *Sufferings* of his Son, to the common *Prejudices* of Mankind; especially of the *Heathen* World, whose Minds were less prepared for this Dispensation than the *Jews*, if we consider the Light and advantages which the *Jewish* Nation had above the *Gentile* World: That so by this Means and Method he might wean them by degrees from their gross conceptions of things, and rectifie more easily their wrong apprehensions by gratifying them in some measure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakness by bending and accommodating the Way and Method of our Salvation to our weak Capacity and imperfect Conceptions of things.

Fourthly, And that God hath done this in the Dispensation of the Gospel will I think very plainly appear in the following Instances; in most of which I shall be very brief, and only insist somewhat more largely upon the last of them.

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1st. The World was much given to admire *Mysteries* in Religion. The *Jews* had *theirs*; several of which by God's own appointment were reserv'd and kept secret in a great measure from the People; others were added by the Superstition of after-Ages, and held in equal or rather greater Veneration than the former: And the *Heathen* likewise had *theirs*; the *Devil* always affecting to imitate God so far as served his wicked and malicious design of seducing Mankind into *Idolatry* and the *Worship* of himself: And therefore the *Scripture* always speaks of the *Heathen Idolatry* as the *Worship* of *Devils*, and not of *God*: So that almost every *Nation* had their peculiar and celebrated *Mysteries*; most of which were either very odd and phantastical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhumane and cruel, and every way unworthy of the *Deity*.

But the great *Mystery* of the *Christian Religion*, the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*; or, as the *Apostle* calls it, *God manifested in the flesh*; was such a *Mystery*, as for the greatness and wonderfulness, for the Infinite mercy and condescension of it, did obscure and swallow up all other *Mysteries*. For which reason the *Apostle*, in allusion to the *Heathen Mysteries* and in contempt of them, speaking of the great *Mystery* of the *Christian Religion*, says, *without controversie great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifested in the flesh*, &c. Since the World had such an admiration for *Mysteries*, he instanceth in that which was a *Mystery* indeed; a *Mystery* beyond all dispute, and beyond all comparison. 1 Tim. 3. 16.

2^{dly}. There was likewise a great inclination in Mankind to the *Worship* of a *visible* and *sensible Deity*: And this was a main Root and Source of the various *Idolatries* in the *Heathen World*. Now to take Men off from *this*, God was pleased to appear in our Nature; that they who were so fond of a *visible Deity* might have one to whom they might pay *Divine Worship* without danger of *Idolatry*, and without injury to the *Divine Nature*: even a true and natural *Image* of God the *Father*, the *Fountain* of the *Deity*; or, as the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* describes the *Son of God*, the resplendency or *brightness* of his *Father's Glory*, and the express *Character* or *Image* of his *Person*. Heb. 1. 2.

3^{dly}. Another *Notion* which had generally obtained among Mankind, was concerning the *Expiation* of the *Sins* of Men, and appeasing the offended *Deity* by *Sacrifice*, upon which they supposed the *punishment* due to the *Sinner* was transferred, to exempt him from it: Especially by the *Sacrifices* of Men, which had almost universally prevailed in the *Gentile World*.

And this *Notion* of the *Expiation* of *Sin*, by *Sacrifices* of one kind or other, seems to have obtained very early in the *World*, and among all other ways of *Divine Worship* to have found the most universal Reception in all *Times* and *Places*. And indeed a great part of the *Jewish Religion* and *Worship* was a plain Condescension to the general apprehensions of Men concerning this way of appeasing the *Deity* by *Sacrifice*: And the greatest part of the *Pagan Religion* and *Worship* was likewise founded upon the same *Notion*, and *Opinion*, which because it was so universal, seems to have had its *Original* from the *first Parents* of Mankind; either immediately after the *Creation*, or after the *Flood*; and from thence, I mean as to the substance of this *Notion*, to have been derived and propagated to all their *Posterity*.

And with this general *Notion* of Mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleased so far to comply as once for all to have a general *Atonement* made for the *Sins* of all Mankind by the *Sacrifice* of his *only Son*, whom his wise Providence did permit by wicked hands to be

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crucified and slain. But I shall not at present insist any further upon this: which requires a particular Discourse by it self, and may by God's assistance in due time have it.

4thly, Another very common *Notion* and very rife in the *Heathen World*, and a great *Source* of their *Idolatry*, was their *Apotheoses* or *Canonizing* of famous and eminent Persons, who in their *Life-time* had done great things and some way or other been great *Benefactors* to Mankind, by advancing them after their *Death* to the *Dignity* of an *inferiour* kind of *Gods* fit to be worshipp'd by Men here on *Earth*, and to have their *Prayers* and *Supplications* address'd to them as proper and powerful *Mediators* and *Intercessors* for them with the *Superiour Gods*: To these they gave the *Titles* of *Hero's* and *Semi Dei*, that is, *half Gods*; though the *Notion* of a *Being* that is just *half infinite* seems to me very hard to be conceiv'd and defin'd.

Now to take Men off from this kind of *Idolatry*, and to put an end to it, behold *One* in our *Nature* exalted to the *right hand* of the *Majesty on high*, to be worshipp'd by *Men* and *Angels*: *One* that was the truly *Great Benefactor* of Mankind: *One* that *was dead*, and *is alive again*, and *lives for evermore*, to make *intercession* for us.

5thly, To give but one *Instance* more, which I have already intimated: The *World* was mightily bent upon addressing their requests and supplications, not to the *Deity* immediately, because their *Superstition* thought that too great a presumption, but by some *Mediators* between the *Gods* and *them*, who might with advantage in this humble manner present their *Requests* so as to find acceptance. To this end they made use of the *Demons* or *Angels*, and of their *Hero's*, or *Deified Men* whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their *Prayers* to the *Supreme Gods*, hoping by their *Intercession*, and *Patronage* of their Cause, to obtain a gracious answer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehension, and thereby more easily and effectually to extirpate this sort of *Idolatry* which had been so long, and so generally practis'd in the *World*, God was pleased to constitute and appoint *One* in our *Nature* to be a perpetual *Advocate* and *Intercessor* in *Heaven* for us, to offer up our *Prayers* to God his *Father*, and to
1 Tim. 2.5. obtain *mercy* for us, and *grace* to help in *time* of need.

And for ever to take us off from all other *Mediators*, we are expressly told in *Scripture*, that as there is but *one God* to whom we are to pray, so there is but *one Mediator between God and Man*, the *Man Christ Jesus*, by whom we are to offer up our *Prayers* to God: And that we need not look out
Heb. 7.25. for any other, since the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, that he *is able* to *save* to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he *lives* for ever to make *intercession* for us.

And for this reason the *Church of Rome* is altogether inexcusable in this Point, for introducing more *Mediators* and *Intercessors*, more *Patrons* and *Advocates* in *Heaven* for us: And this not only without any necessity, for who can add any vertue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent *Intercession* of the *Son of God*? but likewise in direct contradiction to the express Constitution and Appointment of God himself, who says, there is but *one Mediator between God and Men*, and they say there ought to be many more, not only the *B. Virgin*, but all the *Saints* and *Angels* in *Heaven*. Besides that by this very thing they revive one notorious Piece of the old *Pagan Idolatry*, which God so plainly design'd to extinguish by appointing *One only Mediator between God and Men*.

By this *Condescension* likewise God hath given us the comfortable assurance of a most powerful and a perpetual *Intercessor* at the *right hand* of God in our behalf

behalf. For if we consider *Christ* as *Man* and of the same *Nature* with us, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, so very nearly allied and related to us, we may easily believe, that he hath a most tender care and concernment for us: That he sincerely wisheth our happiness, and will by all means seek to procure it, if we our selves by our own wilful obstinacy do not hinder it, and resist the kindness and the counsel of God against our selves: For if we be resolved to continue impenitent, there is no help for us; we must die in our Sins, and Salvation it self cannot save us.

But to proceed; it cannot surely but be matter of greatest consolation to us, that the *Man Christ Jesus* who is now so highly exalted at the right hand of God, and who hath all power in Heaven and Earth committed to him, is our Patron and Advocate in Heaven to plead our Cause with God: Since we cannot but think, that He who was pleased to Become Brother to us all, does bear a true affection and good will to us: And that he who assumed our Nature will heartily espouse our Cause, and plead it powerfully for us, and will with all possible advantage recommend our Petitions and Requests to God.

But then, if we consider further, that He did not only take our Nature, but likewise took our infirmities and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the saddest sufferings to which human Nature is subject in this World, and was tempted in all things like as we are: This gives us still greater assurance that he who suffer'd and was tempted himself cannot but be touch'd with a lively sense of our Infirmities, and must have learned by his own Sufferings to compassionate ours, and to be ready to succour us when we are tempted, and to afford us grace and help suitable to all our wants and Infirmities: For nothing gives us so just a sense of the Sufferings of others, as the remembrance of our own, and the bitter experience of the like Sufferings and Temptations in our selves.

And this the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* doth very particularly insist upon as matter of greatest comfort and encouragement to us, that the *Son of God* did not only assume our Nature, but was made in all things like unto us, and during his abode here upon Earth did suffer and was tempted like as we are: For verily, says the *Apostle*, he took not on him the nature of Angels, but of the seed of Abraham: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God: For in that he himself suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Heb. 2. 16, 17, 18.

And again, exhorting the *Jews* who were newly converted to Christianity, to continue stedfast in their Profession, notwithstanding all the sufferings to which upon that account they were exposed; he comforts them with this consideration, that we have at the right hand of God so powerful an Advocate and Intercessor for us as the *Son of God*, who is sensible of our Case, having suffered the same things Himself, and therefore we cannot doubt of his compassion to us, and readiness to support us in the like Sufferings: See Heb. 4. 14, 15, 16. ing then, says he, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession: For we have not an High-Priest, that cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin: From whence he concludes, that having such an Intercessor we may with great confidence and assurance address our Supplications to God for his mercy and help in all our wants and weakness, to supply the one, and to assist the other: Let us therefore, says he, come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, *χαρις εἰς ἐνσώματον βοήθειαν*, grace for seasonable relief.

So that our *B. Saviour* and *Redeemer*. now that he is advanced to *Heaven* and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his Glory and Greatness; but with the tenderest affection and compassion to Mankind doth still prosecute the Design of our Salvation; and in virtue of his meritorious Obedience and Sufferings, which he presents to God continually, he offers up our Prayers to Him, and pleads our Cause with Him, and represents to him all our wants and necessities, and procures for us a favourable answer of our Prayers, and supplies of grace and strength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by virtue of this prevalent *Intercession* of his with God, for us, our *Sins* are forgiven, and our *Wants* supplied, and our *Requests* granted, and the gracious *assistance* and *supports* of God's *H. Spirit* are seasonably afforded to us, and we are kept by the mighty power of God through Faith unto Salvation: In a word, all those *Blessings* and *Benefits* are procured for us by his *Intercession* in *Heaven*, which he purchased for us by his *Blood* upon *Earth*.

So that in this *Method* of our *Salvation*, besides many other gracious *Condescensions* which God hath made to the *weakness* and *prejudices* of Mankind, our *B. Saviour* hath perfectly supplied the *two* great *Wants* concerning which Mankind was at so great a loss before, *namely* the *Want* of an effectual *Expiatory Sacrifice* for *Sin* upon *Earth*, and of a prevalent *Mediator* and *Intercessor* with God in *Heaven*.

And he hath, in great Goodness and Condescension to our inveterate Prejudices concerning these things, taken effectual care fully to supply both these *Wants*; having appeared in the end of the *World* to take away *Sin* by the *Sacrifice* of himself; and in virtue of that *Sacrifice* appearing now in *Heaven* in the presence of God for us, he is become our perpetual *Advocate* and a most prevalent *Intercessor* with God on our behalf.

For instead of the various and endless *Sacrifices* of the *Jews* and *Heathens*, the *Son of God* hath by one *Sacrifice* for *Sins* perfected for ever them that are sanctified: And instead of the *Mediation* of *Demons* and *Hero's*, to offer up our *Prayers* to God, which were the *Intercessors* made use of among the *Heathen*, we have one *Mediator* between God and Men, appointed by God himself, even the *Son of God*, who is entred into *Heaven* it self, there to appear in the presence of God for us: And to assure us that he commiserates our Case, and hath a true and tender sense of our *Infirmities* and *Sufferings*, the very manner of his *Intercession* for us, as the *Scripture* represents it to us, is a plain *Demonstration* of the thing: For he intercedes for us in *Heaven* by representing to God his *Father* his *Sufferings* upon *Earth*; and pleading them in our behalf: So that the very *Argument* which he useth to God for us cannot but stir up compassion in him towards us, and whilst he represents his *Own* *Sufferings* in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and insensible of *Ours*.

You see then that in this *Dispensation* of God for our *Salvation*, by sending his *Son* in our *Nature*, things are not only suited in great *condescension* to our *apprehensions*, but are likewise in great compassion to us every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great *Patron* and *Advocate* who was our *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation*. And surely we have all the reason in the *World* to believe, that he who in the days of his *flesh* humbled himself and became obedient to the death for our sakes, will be ready to do us all good offices now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon *Earth*, now that he lives again, will make *intercession* for us in *Heaven* and perfect that *Salvation* which he purchased for us upon the *Cross*. And

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And therefore we find in *Scripture*, that as the *purchasing* of our Salvation is ascribed to the *Death* and *Sufferings* of *Christ*, so the *perfecting* of it is attributed to his *Intercession* for us at the right hand of his *Father*: *Wherefore*, says the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he liveth for ever to make intercession for us*: He *died* once to purchase these benefits, but he *lives* for ever to procure them for us, and to apply them to us: And now that he is in *Heaven*, he is as present upon our *Concernments*, and lays our *Happiness* as much to Heart as when he dwelt here among us on *Earth*, and poured out his *Blood* a *Sacrifice* for *Sin* upon the *Cross*: And that when he lived here below he suffer'd and was tempted as we are; this very consideration gives us the greatest assurance possible that he is still touched with the feeling of our *Infirmities*, and hath a lively sense of our *Sufferings*; and consequently, that he doth *compassionate* our *Case* and will use all his power and interest for our advantage, for our *seasonable* support and succour in all our trials and sufferings. But besides the wonderful *Condescension* of this *Dispensation*, there is likewise in the *Fifth* and last place, a great *Congruity* and *fitness* in the thing it self; and his *Method* of our *Salvation* which the *Wisdom* of *God* hath pitched upon is in many other respects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar *Example* of holiness and obedience in our own *Nature*, by which we plainly see, that *God* requires nothing of us, but what he himself when he submitted to become *Man* did think fit to do: For being made of a *Woman*, he was of necessity made under the *Law*, and by assuming *human Nature* he became naturally subject to the *Laws* and conditions of his *Being*.

And here likewise is a provision made for the *Expiation* and *Forgiveness* of our *Sins*, in a way not only very honourable to the *Justice* of *God* and the *Authority* of his *Laws*, but likewise very effectual to discountenance *Sin* and to deter Men from it; since *God* did not think fit to forgive the *Sins* of Men without great *Sufferings*, and that in our *Nature*: For though *God* was willing to save the *Sinner*, yet rather than encouragement should be given to *Sin* by letting it go unpunish'd, he was contented to give up the dearly beloved of his *Soul* to be a *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation* for the *Sins* of the whole *World*.

By the same means also we have a most powerful Antidote against the fear of *Suffering*, and particularly against the fear of *Death*, one of the greatest slaveries of human *Nature*: So also the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, that for this cause *Christ* himself also took part of *flesh* and *blood*, that by *Death* he might destroy him that had the power of *Death*; that is, the *Devil*; and might deliver those who through fear of *Death* were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Again, we have hereby full assurance of a blessed *Immortality* in another *Life*, because in our *Nature* *Death* and all the *Powers* of *Darkness* were baffled and overcome. The *Death* of *Christ*, which could not have been without his *Incarnation*, and likewise his *Resurrection* from the dead and his *Ascension* into *Heaven*, are sensible Demonstrations to all Mankind of a blessed *Immortality* after *Death*; which is the most powerful motive in the *World* to *Obedience* and a holy *Life*.

And lastly, we may upon this account promise to our selves a fair and equal *Trial* at the *Judgment* of the great *Day*, because we shall then be judged by a *Man* like our selves. Our *Saviour* and *Judge* himself hath told us, that for this reason *God* hath committed all *Judgment* to the *Son*, because he is the *Son* of *Man*. And this in human *Judgments* is accounted a great *Privilege*, to be

John 5.
26, 27.

be judged by those who are of the same Rank and Condition with our selves, and who are likely to understand best and most carefully to examine and consider all our circumstances, and to render our Case as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we shall be acquitted or condemned by such a Judge as according to human measures we our selves should have chosen; by One in our own Nature *who was made in all things like unto us*, that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our Judge, because it would have made him a Criminal like our selves. And therefore the *Apostle* offers this as a firm ground of assurance to us that *God will judge the World in Righteousness*, because this Judgment shall be administred by a Man like our selves; *He hath*, saith he, *appointed a Day wherein he will Judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, &c.*

I shall now only make a practical *Inference* or two from what hath been delivered upon this *Argument* and so conclude the whole *Discourse*.

First, The serious consideration of what hath been said concerning the *Incarnation* of our *B. Saviour* should effectually prevail with us to comply with the great End and Design of the *Son of God's* becoming *Man* and dwelling amongst us, and of his doing and suffering all those things which are recorded of him in the *History* of his *Life* and *Death* written by the *H. Evangelists*: I say, the consideration hereof should persuade us all to comply with the great *Design* of all this, which is the *Reformation* of Mankind and the *Recovery* of us out of that sinful and miserable estate into which we were fallen: Because the *Salvation* which the *Son of God* hath purchased for us, and which he offers to us by the *Gospel*, is not to be accomplished and brought about any other way than by forsaking our Sins and reforming our *Lives*. The *Grace of God*, which hath appeared to all Men and brings *Salvation*, will not make us partakers of it any other way, nor by any other means, than by teaching us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present World. God sent his Son *Jesus* to bless us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities; and unless this change be effectually wrought in us; we are utterly incapable of all the Blessings of the *Gospel of Christ*. All that He hath done for us without us will avail us nothing, unless we be inwardly transformed and renewed in the spirit of our minds; unless we become new Creatures, unless we make it the continual and sincere endeavour of our lives to keep the commandments of God.

Heb. 12.

14.

1 Joh 3 3.

For the *Scripture* is most exprefs and positive in this matter; That without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord: That every Man that hath this hope in Him, that is, in Christ, to be saved by Him, must purifie himself even as he is pure. We do not rightly and truly believe that *Jesus Christ* came into the World to save Sinners, if we be not also thoroughly convinc'd that it is as necessary for us to leave our Sins, as to believe this most faithful and credible Saying.

The Obedience and Sufferings of our *B. Saviour* are indeed accounted to us for *Righteousness*, and will most certainly redound to our unspeakable benefit and advantage upon our performance of the Condition which the *Gospel* doth require on our Part, namely, that every man that names the Name of Christ depart from iniquity; And the *Grace of God's H. Spirit* is ready to enable us to perform this Condition; if we earnestly ask it, and do sincerely co-operate with it: Provided we do what we can on our part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we receive the *Grace of God* in vain, and take no care to perform the Condition, and do neglect to implore the Grace and assistance of

of God's *H. Spirit* to that purpose, we have none to blame but our selves; because it is then wholly our own fault if we fall short of that Happiness which *Christ* hath purchased, and promised to us upon such easie and reasonable *Conditions* as the *Gospel* proposeth.

But I no where find that God hath promised to force Happiness upon the negligent, and a Reward upon the *wicked and slothful Servant*: A Gift may be given for nothing, but surely a Reward does in the very nature of it always suppose some *Service*. None but a *righteous Man* is capable of a *righteous Man's Reward*: And St. *John* hath sufficiently cautioned us not to think our selves *Righteous* unless we be *doers of righteousness*: *Little children*, says he, *let no man deceive you, he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* ^{2 Joh 3 7.} This is so very plain a *Text*, that if Men were not either very easie to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themselves, they could not possibly mistake the meaning of it: And therefore I will repeat it once more, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.*

Secondly, The other *Inference* which I would make from the precedent *Discourse* is this, That with all possible thankfulness we should acknowledge and adore the wonderful Goodness and Condescension of Almighty God in sending his *only begotten Son* into the World in our Nature to be *made flesh*, and to *dwell amongst us* in order to our Recovery and Salvation: A Method and Dispensation not only full of mercy and goodness, but of great Condescension to our meanness, and of mighty virtue and efficacy for our Redemption and Deliverance from the Guilt and Dominion of Sin; and upon all accounts every way so much for our benefit and advantage. So that well may we say with St. *Paul*, *This is a faithful Saying, πειστέστε, λέγει, a credible Word, and worthy of all acceptation*, that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all possible Joy and Thankfulness, *That Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners.*

What an everlasting Fountain of the most invaluable Blessings and Benefits to Mankind is the Incarnation of the Son of God? His vouchsafing to assume our Nature, and to reside and converse so long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* should condescend to do all this for us? That the High and Glorious Majesty of Heaven should stoop down to the Earth, and be contented to be clothed with Misery and Mortality? That He should submit to so poor and low a Condition, to such dreadful and disgraceful Sufferings for our sakes? For what are *We*? vile and despicable Creatures, Guilty and Unworthy, Offenders and Apostates, Enemies and Rebels. Blessed God! how great is thy Goodness? how infinite are thy tender Mercies and Compassions to Mankind? That thou should'st regard us whilst we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition when we had *forgotten thee days without number*, and should'st take such pity on us when we shew'd none to our selves; and whilst we were thy declared and implacable Enemies should'st express more kindness and good will to us, than the best of Men ever did to their best Friends.

When we reflect seriously upon those great things which God hath done in our behalf, and consider that mighty Salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we possibly render, what acknowledgments shall we ever be able to make, I do not say equal but in any wise meet and becoming, to this great Benefactor of Mankind? Who when we had so highly offended and provok'd Him, and so foolishly and so fatally undone our selves; when we were become so guilty and so miserable, and so much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation than of his
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pity and compassion, was pleas'd to send his *own*, his *only Son* into the World to seek and save us; and by him to repair all our ruines, to forgive all our iniquities, to heal all our spiritual diseases and to crown us with loving kindness and tender mercies.

And what Sacrifices of Praise and Thanksgiving should we also offer up to this gracious and most merciful Redeemer of ours, the everlasting Son of the Father, who debased himself so infinitely for our sakes, and when he took upon Him to deliver Man did not abhor the Virgins Womb: Who was contented to be born so obscurely, and to live all his life in a poor and persecuted condition; and was pleased both to undergo and to overcome the sharpness of Death that he might open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers?

Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his *H. Table*, and receiving the blessed Symbols and Pledges of his precious Death and Passion; How should our Hearts burn within us and leap for Joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our Spirits, and put us into an Extasie of Love and Gratitude to this great Friend and Lover of Souls? And with the *B. Mother* of our Lord, how should our Souls, upon that blessed occasion, magnifie the Lord, and our Spirits rejoice in God our Saviour?

The Holy Men of old were transported with Joy at the obscure and confused apprehension and remote foresight of so great a Blessing, at so great a distance: It is said of Abraham, the Father of the faithful, that he saw His Day afar off and was glad. How should we then be affected with Joy and Thankfulness, to whom the Son of God and B. Saviour of Men is actually come? He is come many ages ago, and hath enlightned a great part of the World with his Glory. Yea, He is come to us, who were in a manner separated from the rest of the World: To Us is this great Light come, who had so long sate in Darkness and in the shadow of Death: And this mighty Salvation which He hath wrought for us is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon those gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offer'd to us in his *H. Gospel*.

And by his Coming he hath delivered Mankind from that gross Ignorance and thick Darkness which covered the Nations: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true: And we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: This is the true God, and eternal Life. And then it immediately follows, Little Children, keep your selves from Idols. What can be the meaning of this Caution? and what is the Connection of it with the foregoing Discourse? It is plainly this, That the Son of God by His Coming had rescued Mankind from the sottish Worship of Idols; and therefore he Cautions Christians to take great heed of relapsing into Idolatry by worshipping a Creature, or the Image and likeness of any Creature instead of God. And because he foresaw that it might be objected to Christians, as in fact it was afterwards by the Heathen, that the Worship of Christ, who was a Man, was as much Idolatry as that which the Christians charged the Heathens withal: Therefore St. John effectually to prevent the force of this plausible Objection, though he perpetually, throughout his Gospel declares Christ to be really a Man, yet he expressly also affirms Him to be God, and the true God; and consequently, Christians might safely pay Divine Worship to Him without fear or danger of Idolatry: We are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: This is the true God and eternal Life: Little Children, keep your selves from Idols.

But this I am sensible is a Digression, yet such a one as may not be altogether useless.

To proceed then in the recital of those great Blessings which the *Coming* of the *Son of God* hath brought to Mankind. He hath rescued us from the bondage of *Sin*, and from the slavery of *Satan*: He hath openly proclaimed Pardon and reconciliation to the World: He hath clearly revealed eternal Life to us, which was but obscurely made known before, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; but is now made manifest by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel: He hath purchased this great Blessing for us; and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our Sins and to be saved by Him: A Condition without which as Salvation is not to be had, so if it were, it would not be desirable, it could not make us happy; because our Sins would still separate between God and us, and the guilt and horror of our own Minds would make us eternally miserable.

And now surely we cannot but thus judge, that all the Praises and Acknowledgments, all the Service and Obedience which we can possibly render to Him, are infinitely beneath those infinite Obligations which the *Son of God* hath laid upon the Sons of Men by his *Coming into the World to save Sinners*.

What then remains, but that at all times, and more especially at this Season we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing Goodness of God to us, in the *Incarnation* of his *Son* for the Redemption and Salvation of the sinful and miserable Race of Mankind? A Method and Dispensation of the Divine Grace and Wisdom, not only full of mercy and condescension, but of great power and virtue to purifie our Hearts and to reform our Lives; to beget in us a fervent love of *God our Saviour*, and a perfect hatred and detestation of our Sins, and a stedfast purpose and resolution to lead a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life. In a word, a Method that is every way calculated for our unspeakable Benefit and Comfort.

Since then the *Son of God* hath so graciously condescended to be made in all things like unto us, *Sin only excepted*; let us aspire to be as like to Him as is possible in the exemplary Holiness and Vertues of his Life. We cannot be like Him in his Miracles, but we may in his Mercy and Compassion: We cannot imitate his Divine Power, but we may resemble Him in his Innocency and Humility, in his Meekness and Patience. And as He assumed Human Nature, so let us re-assume Humanity which we have in great measure depraved and put off; and let us put on bowels of mercy towards those that are in misery, and be ready to relieve the poor for *His sake, who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich*.

To conclude, Let us imitate *Him* in that which was his great Work and Business here upon Earth, and which of all other did best become the *Son of God*; I mean, in His going about doing good: That by giving Glory to God in the Highest, and by endeavouring as much as in us lies, to procure and promote Peace on Earth, and Good Will amongst Men we may at last be made meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light: Through the Mercies and Merits of our *B. Saviour and Redeemer*. Amen.

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our Nature upon Him, and as at this Time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate and made thy Children by Adoption and Grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

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S E R-

S E R M O N XLVII.

Concerning the
Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ, &c.

H E B. IX. 26.

*But now once hath he appeared in the end of the World,
 to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.*

AMONG many other great Ends and Reasons for which God was pleased to send his Son into the World to dwell amongst us, this was one of the chief, that by a long course of the greatest innocency and the greatest sufferings in our Nature he might be capable to make a perfect Expiation of Sin: *But now once in the end of the World, ὅτι οὕτως αἰώνως, in the conclusion of the Ages, that is, in the last Age of the World, which is the Gospel Age, hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.*

The general Design of God in the sending his Son into the World was to save Mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for us eternal life and happiness. So the *Author* of our Salvation himself tells us, That
 Joh. 3. 16. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Now in order to the procuring of this Salvation for us, the Impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed: these were the *guilt*, and the *dominion* of Sin: By the *guilt* of Sin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of God and to eternal condemnation, and by the *defilement* and *dominion* of it we were incapable of the happiness of Heaven and the reward of eternal Life.

To remove these two great Hindrances, two things were necessary: The Forgiveness of sins past in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God and the eternal torments of the next Life; and the Reformation of our hearts and lives to make us capable of eternal Life and Happiness in another World. And both these, if God had so pleased, might for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and dispensation of sending his Son in our Nature *to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*: But it seems the wisdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our Salvation, and no doubt for very good *Reasons*; amongst which these *three* seem to be very obvious and very considerable.

First, To vindicate the honour of his Laws, which if Sin had gone altogether unpunish'd would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general Pardon of Sin to all Mankind without any testimony of his wrath and displeasure against it, who would have had any great veneration for his Laws, or have believed in good earnest, that the violation of them had been either so extremely offensive to him, or so very dangerous to the Sinner?

There-

Therefore to maintain the honour of his Laws, rather than Sin should pass unpunish'd, God would lay the punishment of it upon his only begotten Son, the dearest Person to him in the World : Which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against Sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his Laws, than if the Sinner had suffered the punishment due to it in his own person.

Secondly, Another Reason of this Dispensation, and that likewise very considerable, was, that God might forgive Sin in such a way as yet effectually to discountenance and discourage it, and to create in us the greatest horror and hatred of it : Which could not have been by an absolute Pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his Justice. For had Sin been so easily forgiven, who would have been sensible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future ?

But when God makes his own Son a Sacrifice, and lays upon him the punishment due for the Iniquities of us all, this is a demonstration that God hates Sin as much, if it be possible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly shews what Sin deserves, and what the Sinner may justly expect, if after this severity of God against it he will venture to commit it.

And if this Sacrifice for Sin, and the Pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from Sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it : If we sin wilfully after so clear a Revelation of the *wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men*, there remains *no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries*. For what could God do more to testify his displeasure against sin, and to discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son an Offering for Sin, and to give him up to be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities ? In what clearer Glass can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of Sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to Sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins and for our sakes ?

Thirdly, Another Reason of this Dispensation seems to have been a gracious condescension and compliance of Almighty God with a certain apprehension and persuasion, which had very early and universally obtained among Mankind, concerning the expiation of Sin and appeasing the offended Deity by Sacrifices : By the Sacrifices of living Creatures, of Birds and Beasts ; and afterwards by humane Sacrifices and *the blood of their Sons and Daughters* : by offering to God, as the expression is in the *Prophet*, *their first-born for their transgression, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls*.

And this Notion of the expiation of Sin by Sacrifice, whether it had its first Rise from *Divine Revelation*, and was afterwards propagated from Age to Age by *Tradition* : I say, from whence soever this Notion came, it hath of all other Notions concerning Religion, excepting those of the *Being of God and his Providence*, and of the *Recompences of another Life*, found the most universal reception, and the thing hath been the most generally practised in all Ages and Nations, not only in the *old*, but in the *new* discovered parts of the World.

And indeed a very great part of the *Jewish Religion*, which was instituted by God himself, seems to have been a plain condescension to the general Apprehension of Mankind, concerning this way of appeasing the offended Deity by Sacrifices : As it was also a Figure of that great and efficacious Sacrifice which should in due time be offered to God to make atonement once for all the Sins of Mankind.

And the *Apostle to the Hebrews* doth very particularly insist upon this

condescension of God to them, in the Dispensation of the Gospel: and where- as they apprehended so great a necessity of an *High-Priest* and of *Sacrifices* to make expiation for the sins of the People, that it was an establish'd *Prin- ciple* among them, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of Sins*; God was pleased to comply so far with these Notions and Apprehensions of theirs as to make his own Son both a *Priest* and a *Sacrifice*, to do that once for all which their own *High-Priest* pretended to do year by year.

And from hence the same *Apostle* takes occasion to recommend to them the *new Covenant* and *Dispensation* of the *Gospel*, as having a greater and more perfect *High-Priest* and a more excellent *Sacrifice*, than were the *High-Priests* and the *Sacrifices* under the *Law*; the *Son of God* having by one *Sacrifice* of himself obtained eternal *Redemption* for us, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

And this Apprehension prevailed no less in the *Heathen* World, and pro- ceeded to the *Sacrifices* of Men, even of their *first born*. And with this Ap- prehension, not to countenance but to abolish it, God was pleased to com- ply so far as to make a general *Atonement* for the Sins of Mankind by the Death of his Son, appearing in our Nature to become a voluntary *Sacrifice* for us: God permitting him to be unjustly put to death and his Blood to be shed by the malice of Men, in appearance as a Malefactor, but in truth as a Martyr; and accepting of his Death as a meritorious *Sacrifice* and *propitiation* for the Sins of the whole World: That by this wise counsel and permission of his Providence he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhuman way of serving God which had been so long in use and practice among them. The Son of God by the voluntary *Sacrifice* of himself having effected all that at once, and for ever, which Mankind from the beginning of the World had in vain been endeavouring to accomplish by innumerable and continual *Sacrifices*; namely the pardon of their Sins, and perfect Peace and Recon- ciliation with God.

For these Ends and Reasons, and perhaps for many more as great and con- siderable as these which our shallow understandings are not able to fathom, the Wisdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering Mankind from the guilt and dominion of Sin by the *Sacrifice* of his Son. And to this end it was requisite that he should appear in our Nature and dwell amongst us for some considerable time, that by a long course of the greatest Innocency and of the greatest Sufferings in our Nature he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of Sin.

So that *two* things were requisite to qualify him for this purpose; perfect *Innocency* and *Obedience*, and great *Sufferings* in our Nature, even to the suf- fering of Death. Both these the *Scripture* declares to be necessary qualificati- ons of a Person capable to make expiation of Sin; and both these were found in the Person of our *B. Saviour*.

First, Unspotted Innocency and perfect *Obedience*. This the *Scripture* testi- fies concerning Him, and the whole course of his Life and Actions. He Heb. 4. 15. *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*, saith the *Apostle* to the Joh. 8. 29. *Hebrews*. *He always did the things which pleased God*, as he testifies con- cerning himself, and we are sure that his witness is true. *He did no sin, nei- ther was guile found in his mouth*, as St. Peter tells us of Him. And this was necessary to qualify him for the perfect expiation of Sin, whether we consi- der Him as a *Priest*, or as a *Sacrifice*. 1 Pet. 2. 22.

As a *Priest*, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the Sins of others, had he not been without sin himself. And this the *Apostle* tells us, is one great Advantage of our *High-Priest* under the *Gospel*, above the *High- Priest*

Priest under the *Law*, who being a Sinner himself, as well as those for whom he offer'd, had need to offer for himself before he could make so much as a Legal expiation for the Sins of others: But a perfect and effectual expiation of Sin, so as to purge the Conscience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High-Priest who is holy and innocent himself; *For such an High-Priest*, saith the *Apostle*, *became us*, that is, now under the Dispensation of the *Gospel*, when a perfect expiation of Sins is to be made, *such an High-Priest* is necessary, *as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, who needs not as those High-Priests*, that is, as the High-Priests under the *Law*, to offer up sacrifice first for his own Sins, and then for the People: The plain force of which Argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the Sins of others must be without sin himself.

And then if we consider *Christ* as a *Sacrifice* for Sin; perfect holiness is necessary to make a *Sacrifice* acceptable and available for the expiation of Sin. The necessity of this was typified by the quality of the *expiatory Sacrifices* under the *Law*: the *Beasts* that were to be offered were to be *without spot and blemish*: To which the *Apostle* alludes speaking of the quality and efficacy of the *Sacrifice of Christ*: *How much more*, says he, *shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?* And to the same purpose St. Peter, *Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, &c.* hereby intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocency and holiness of him who was to be a *Sacrifice* for us could have expiated the guilt of our sins, and purchased eternal Redemption for us.

Secondly, Great *Sufferings* likewise in our Nature, even to the suffering of Death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of Sin: I say, even to the suffering of Death. For the *Sacrifices* which were to make expiation, were to be slain. And it was a constant *Maxim* and principle among the *Jews*, and the *Apostle* more than once in this *Epistle* seems to allow and confirm it, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of Sins*.

Not that God could not have pardoned Sin without satisfaction made to his Justice, either by the suffering of the Sinner himself, or of a *Sacrifice* in his stead: But according to the Method and Dispensation which the Wisdom of God had pitched upon, he was resolved not to dispense Forgiveness in any other way. For which reason he seems either to have possess'd Mankind with this *Principle*, or to have permitted them to be so persuaded, that *Sin was not to be expiated but by Blood*, that is, either by the Death of the Sinner or of the *Sacrifice*.

Now the Life of our *B. Saviour*, as well as his Death, was made up of *Sufferings* of one kind or other: Continual *Sufferings* from his Cradle to his Cross, from the time he drew his first breath to his giving up the ghost: And not only continual *Sufferings*, but the greatest that ever were, considering the Dignity of the Person that suffered, and the nature of the *Sufferings*: Considering likewise that these *Sufferings* were not only wholly undeserved on his part, but unmerited also on ours, for whose sake he submitted himself to them: Nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmost those for whom and by whom he suffered, and continued still to oblige them by the greatest Blessings and Benefits purchased and procured for them by those very *Sufferings* which with so much Malice and Cruelty they inflicted on him.

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Had our *B. Saviour* been a mere Man, the perfect Innocency and unspotted Purity of his whole Life; his Zeal to do the Will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good*: His constant Obedience to God in the most difficult Instances, and his perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding the ill usage and hard measure, the bitter Reproaches and Persecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natur'd World: His perfect submission to the Will of God, his invincible Patience under the greatest and bitterest Sufferings, and his infinite Charity to his Enemies and Persecutors: These must needs be highly acceptable to God, and if Man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the Sins of others.

But our *Saviour* and our *Sacrifice* being the *Son of God* in our Nature: and He voluntarily assuming it, and submitting to the condition of Humanity in its lowest and most miserable state, Sin only excepted; and his being contented to live a Life of doing good and suffering evil, and at last to be put to Death and slain a Sacrifice for us: The Dignity of the Person who did and suffered all this for us, and his dearness to God, must needs add a mighty value to so perfect an Obedience and such patient Sufferings; so as to render them a full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.

And all this being willingly performed in our Nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reasonably be presumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we our selves had performed it in our own persons: Nothing being so proper and so available to make an *honourable amends* and satisfaction to the Justice of God for the Sins of all Mankind, as the voluntary Obedience and Sufferings of Human Nature in a Person of so great Dignity and dearness to God as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now that Expiation of Sin was made by the Sufferings of *Christ* in our stead, I shall endeavour to make good these *three* ways.

First, From plain Testimonies of *H. Scripture*, declaring this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it.

Secondly, From the nature and intention of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and Heathen; to which the Death of *Christ* is in the *New Testament* so frequently compared, and in point of virtue and efficacy to take away Sin infinitely preferred to it.

Thirdly, By vindicating this Method and Dispensation of the Divine Wisdom from the Objections which are brought against it; and by showing that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any wise unworthy of God.

- I. I shall produce some plain Testimonies of *H. Scripture* which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it; namely, that the *Son of God*, in order to the effectual *Expiation* of Sin, suffered in our stead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect Atonement for Sin, and obtained eternal Redemption for us.

This the *Scripture* declares to us in great variety of expressions; as, that *Christ* died for us, and for our Sins; that he was a *Sacrifice* for us, and a *propitiation* for the Sins of the whole World; that is, of all Mankind; that he *bore our Sins in his own body on the Tree*, and appeared to take away Sin by the *Sacrifice of himself*; that *we are justified in his blood*, and redeemed by the price of it; and in very many other expressions to the same purpose.

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And this is so evidently the scope and meaning of these Expressions, that it cannot be denied without offering the greatest violence imaginable to the *H. Scriptures*. For can any Man think that God would have used so many expressions in *Scripture*, the plain and most obvious sense of all which is, that the *Son of God* suffered for our Sins and in our stead, if this had not been his design and meaning? Would not this be in effect to say, that God had written a great Book to puzzle and confound, but not to instruct and teach Mankind?

I will at present single out some few of those many *Texts* of *Scripture* which might be produced to this purpose: *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*; that is, he hath made him who had no sin himself a Sacrifice for our sins. Again; *and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God*. St. Peter to the same purpose tells us, that *Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*: Here *Christ* is said to have suffered for Sin; and to declare, that the *Apostle* did not only mean that *Christ* suffered upon the occasion of our Sins, but that he suffered in the place and stead of the Sinner; he adds, *the just for the unjust*; that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no Sin, suffered for us who were Sinners; or as it is elsewhere express'd, *he bare our sins in his own body on the Tree*. 2 Cor. 5. 21.
Eph. 5. 10.
1 Pet. 1. 18.

It is true indeed, that *Christ* suffered for our benefit and advantage; which the *Socinians* would have to be all that is meant in the *Texts* which I have cited: But then it ought to be considered, that *Christ's* suffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any wise inconsistent with his suffering in our stead. For whoever suffers in another Man's stead, and to save him from suffering, does undoubtedly suffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the best demonstration of it that can be: But the manner of the expression, if compared with other parallel *Texts* of *Scripture*, and especially with what is so often said of our *Saviour's* being a *Sacrifice*, which I shall have occasion further to urge by and by: I say, the manner of the expression, if well considered, will appear to any Man that is not contentious to signify our *Saviour's* suffering instead of the Sinner.

But not to argue from words and phrases, I will produce two *Texts* which declare this matter so plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided without the most shameful wresting and perverting of them. *This is my Commandment, says our Saviour, that you love one another, as I have loved you*. Joh. 13. 12
ver. 13. How is that? he declares in the next words, *Greater love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his life for his friend*; that is, that he be contented to die in his stead. And to the same purpose St. Paul, *For when ye were yet Sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly*: Now the question is, whether by this expression of *Christ's dying for the ungodly* be meant only his dying for the benefit and advantage of Sinners, but not his dying in their stead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: *For scarcely for a righteous Man will one die, yet peradventure for a good Man one would even dare to die*; But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet Sinners *Christ* died for us: And now I appeal to any Man of good sense, whether it be not plain that the *Apostle* here speaks of *Christ's* dying for sinners in the same sense as one Man is said to die for another; that is, to save another from death; which what is it else but to die in his stead? He that can deny this, is perverse to the highest degree, and I fear almost beyond the possibility of being convinced. Rom. 6. 6,
7, 8.

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And the Argument, from these two *Texts* is so much the stronger, because we do not here reason merely from the phrase and expression, but from the main Scope of our *Saviour's* discourse in the *one*, and of *St. Paul's* in the other. For the design of both is to recommend the Superlative love of *Christ* to us above the greatest love that ever any Man express'd to another. The highest pitch that humane affection did ever rise to, was for a Man to lay down his life for his Friend; but the *Son of God* laid down his life for his Enemies. *Scarcely*, says *St. Paul*, *would one lay down his life for a righteous Man*, that is, for one who is but strictly just and honest, and does no body wrong; but for a *good Man*, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged mankind by great Benefits, some one may be found that would lay down his life to save the life of such a Person: But the love of *Christ* hath gone far beyond this: He *died for Sinners*, for those who were neither *good Men* nor *righteous*: But *God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet Sinners Christ died for us*. Now where doth the force of this Argument lie, if not in this? that *Christ* hath done that for us, who were *Enemies* and *Sinners*, which some very few persons in the World have done for their *Friend*, or for some very eminently *good Man*: And what is that? Why, they have laid down their lives in their stead: And so *Christ* hath done for us. This seems to be so very plain, that I do not see how the force of this Argument is possible to be avoided.

It is evident then from *Scripture*, that *Christ* died not only for our advantage but in our stead; as truly and really as any Man ever did or can die for one another who lays down his own life to save another from death. For if *Christ* had not dyed, we had perished everlastingly; and because he died we are saved from eternal Death and Misery.

And though this be no where in *Scripture* spoken of by the name or term of *Satisfaction*, yet it is said to be the *price* of our *Redemption*; which surely is the same in effect with *Satisfaction*. For as we are *Sinners* we are liable, and, as I may say, indebted to the Justice of God: And the Son of God, by his Death and Sufferings in our Nature, hath discharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us: Which discharge, since it was obtained for us by the shedding of *Christ's* blood, and the *Scripture* tells us, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of Sins*: And since God is graciously pleased to accept of it for the Debt which we owed to his Justice, and to declare himself fully pleased and contented with it, why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *satisfaction*, I confess, I am not able to understand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing, but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in serious matters, what *barretrie* in *Divinity* is this?

Not that God was *angry* with his *Son*, when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: No, he was always well pleased with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to the Death, even the Death of the Cross*, and *bore our Sins in his own body on the Tree*.

Nor yet that our *Saviour* suffered the very same that the Sinner should have suffered, namely the proper Pains and Torment of the Damned: But that his Obedience and Sufferings were of that value and esteem with God, and his voluntary Sacrifice of himself so well-pleasing to him, that he thereupon entered into a Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Mankind, wherein he hath engaged himself to forgive the Sins of those who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the *Blood of Christ* which was shed for us upon the *Cross* is called *the Blood of the Covenant*, as being the *Sanction* of that *New Covenant*, into which God is entered with Mankind: and not only the *Sanction* and *Confirmation* of that *Covenant*, but

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II^d. Thing propounded, which was to shew that the Expiation of our sins was made by the Sufferings of Christ, from the *nature* and *intention* of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and *Heathen*; to which the *Death of Christ* is in the *New Testament* so frequently compared, and in point of *virtue* and *efficacy* to take away Sin infinitely preferr'd to it.

Now the nature and design of *Expiatory Sacrifices* was plainly this: To substitute one *Living Creature* to suffer and die instead of another, so that what the Sinner deserv'd to have suffered was supposed to be done to the sacrifice, that is, it was slain to make an atonement for the Sinner.

And though there was no reason to hope for any such effect from the blood of *Bulls*, or *Goats*, or of any other *Living Creatures* that were wont to be offered up in Sacrifice; yet that both *Jews* and *Heathen* did expect and hope for it, is so very evident, that it cannot without extreme Ignorance or Obstinacy be deny'd.

But this expectation how unreasonable soever, plainly shews it to have been the common Apprehension of Mankind, in all Ages, that, God would not be appeased, nor should Sin be pardoned without Suffering: but yet so that Men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the Repentance of sinners God would accept of a *vicarious* punishment; that is, of the Suffering of some other in their stead. And very probably, as I said before, in compliance with this Apprehension of Mankind, and in condescension to it, as well as for other weighty Reasons best known to the Divine Wisdom, God was pleased to find out such a Sacrifice as should really and effectually procure for them that great Blessing of the Forgiveness of Sins which they had so long hoped for from the multitude of their own Sacrifices.

And the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* doth in a large Discourse shew the great virtue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Christ*, to the purpose of Remission of Sins, above that of the Sacrifices under the Law: And that the *Death of Christ* is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the Sacrifices under the Law were supposed to be to the Sinner: *But now once*, saith the *Apostle* here in the *Text*, *in the end of the World*, *hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*. This is the great virtue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Christ*, that whatever was expected from any other Sacrifices, either by *Jews* or *Heathens*, was really effected by this.

This was plainly signified by the *Jewish Passover*, wherein the *Lamb* was slain and the Sinner did escape, and was pass'd by. In allusion whereto *St. Paul* makes no scruple to call *Christ* our *Passover* or *Paschal Lamb*, who was slain that we might escape: *Christ our Passover*, says he, *is slain*, or offered for us; that is, He by the gracious appointment of God was substituted to suffer all that in our stead which the *Paschal Lamb* was supposed to suffer for the Sinner. 1 Cor. 5. 7.

And this was likewise signified by the Sinner's laying his hand upon the Sacrifice that was to be slain, thereby as it were transferring the punishment which was due to himself upon the Sacrifice that was to be slain and offered up. For so God tells *Moses*, that the Sinner, who came to offer an *Expiatory Sacrifice* should do: *He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him, to make an Atonement for him*. Lev. 1. 4.

And the *Apostle* tells us, that it was an established Principle in the *Jewish Religion*,

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Religion, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of Sins* : Which plainly shews, that they expected this Benefit of the Remission of Sins, from the Blood of their Sacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this Benefit by the Blood of *Christ*, and by the virtue of his Sacrifice : And again, *Christ*, says he, *was once offered to bear the Sins of many* ; plainly alluding to the Sacrifices under the Law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the Sinner.

And that this expression of *Christ's* being *offered to bear our Sins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our Sins by his holy Doctrine which was confirmed by his Death, but of his bearing our Sins by way of *imputation*, and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the Sacrifice was supposed to do for the Sinner ; This, I say, is evident beyond all denial from the opposition which follows, after the *Text*, between his *first* Appearance and his *second* ; *Christ*, says our *Apostle*, *was once offered to bear our Sins ; but unto them that look for him he shall appear a second time without Sin unto Salvation*. Why ? Did he not appear the first time without Sin ? Yes certainly, as to any inherent guilt ; for the *Scripture* tells us, *he had no Sin*. What then is the meaning of the opposition, That at his *first* Coming *he bore our Sins*, but at his *second* Coming *he shall appear without Sin unto Salvation* ? These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his *first* Coming he sustain'd the Person of a Sinner and suffered instead of us ; but his *second* Coming shall be upon another account, and *he shall appear without Sin unto Salvation* ; that is, not as a *Sacrifice*, but as a *Judge*, to confer the Reward of Eternal Life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that *Sacrifice* which he offered to God for us *in the days of his Flesh*. I proceed to the

III. III^d. Thing I propos'd, and which yet remains to be spoken to ; namely, to vindicate this Method and *Dispensation* of the *Divine Wisdom* from the *Objections* which are brought against it ; and to shew that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any wise unworthy of God, I shall mention *four Objections* which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable.

Obj. 1st.

First, That this Method, of the *Expiation* of Sin by the Sufferings of *Christ*, seems to argue some defect and want of Goodness in God, as if he needed some external Motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive Sinners.

To which I think the *Answer* is not difficult, namely, that God did not want Goodness to have forgiven Sin freely and without any Satisfaction, but his Wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to Sin by too easie a forgiveness, and without some remarkable testimony of his severe displeasure against it : And therefore his greater Goodness and Compassion to Mankind devised this way to save the Sinner, without giving the least countenance and encouragement to Sin.

For God to think of saving us any way, was excessive Goodness and Mercy ; but to think of doing it in this way, by substituting his dearly beloved Son to suffer in our stead, is a Condescension so very amazing, that if God had not been pleas'd of his own Goodness to stoop to it, it had almost been Blasphemy in Man to have thought of it, or desired it.

Obj. 2^d.

Secondly, How can our Sins be said to have been forgiven *freely*, if the Pardon of them was purchased at so dear a rate, and so mighty a Price was paid for it ?

In *Answer* to this I desire these *two* things may be considered. *1st.* That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God to admit of this translation of the Punishment which was due to us, and to accept of the Sufferings of another in our stead, and for our benefit; when he might justly have exacted it of us in our own Persons: So that, even in this respect, we are, as *St. Paul* says, *justified freely by his grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ*: And *freely* too in respect of any necessity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his Goodness to save us, even by the Satisfaction and Sufferings of his own Son. *2dly.* It was in effect freely too, notwithstanding the mighty price which was paid for our Redemption. Because this Price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; He *found out this Ransom for us*. And will any Man say, that a Prince who prevails with his Son to intercede for the Pardon of a Rebel, yea and to suffer some punishment or to pay a Fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect and in all equitable and grateful construction forgive him freely?

Thirdly, It is yet further objected, That this seems to be more unreasonable than the sacrificing of *Beasts* among the *Jews*, nay than the sacrificing of *Men* among the *Heathens*, and even of their *own Sons and Daughters*: Because this is the offering up of the *Son of God*, the most innocent and the most excellent Person that ever was. *Obj 3d.*

To which I answer, that if we consider the *manner*, and the *design* of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherwise.

As to the *manner* of it, God did not command his Son to be sacrificed, but his Providence permitted the Wickedness and Violence of Men to put him to death. And then his Goodness and Wisdom did over-rule this worst of Actions to the best of Ends. And if we consider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflection upon the Holy Providence of God, than any Enormities and Cruelties which by his permission are daily committed in the World?

And then if we consider the *End* and *Design* of this permission of *Christ's* Death, and the application of it to the purpose of a general Expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful Design of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreasonable and bloody way of Worship, which had been so long practis'd in the World: And after this one Sacrifice, which was so infinitely dear to God, the benefit of Expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other Sacrifices being worthless and vain in comparison of this: And it hath ever since obtained this effect, of making all other Sacrifices to cease, in all Parts of the World where *Christianity* hath prevailed.

Fourthly, The last *Objection* is, the Injustice and cruelty of an Innocent Person's suffering instead of the Offender. *Obj. 4th.*

To this I answer, That they who make so great a noise with this *Objection* do seem to me to give a full and clear *Answer* to it themselves, by acknowledging, as they constantly and expressly do, that our *Saviour* suffered all this for our *benefit* and *advantage*, though not in our *place* and *stead*. For this, to my apprehension, is plainly to give up the Cause, unless they can shew a good reason why there is not as much Injustice and Cruelty in an Innocent Person's suffering for the benefit and advantage of a Malefactor, as in his suffering in his stead: So little do Men, in the heat of dispute and opposition, who are resolv'd to hold fast an Opinion in despite of Reason and good Sense, consider, that they do many times in effect, and by necessary consequence, grant the very thing which in express terms they do so stiffly and pertinaciously deny.

The truth of the matter is this; there is nothing of Injustice or Cruelty in either Case; neither in an innocent Person's suffering for the *benefit* of an Offender, nor in his *stead*; supposing the Suffering to be voluntary: But they have equally the same appearance of Injustice and Cruelty: Nor can I possibly discern any reason why Injustice and Cruelty should be objected in the one Case more than in the other, there being every whit as little reason why an *Innocent Person* should suffer for the *benefit* of a *Criminal*, as why he should suffer in his *stead*. So that I hope this *Objection*, which above all the rest hath been so loudly and so invidiously urged, hath receiv'd a just *Answer*.

And I believe, if the matter were search'd to the bottom, all this perverse contention, about our Saviour's suffering for our *benefit* but not in our *stead*, will signify just nothing. For if *Christ* died for our *benefit* so as some way or other, by virtue of his Death and Sufferings to save us from the wrath of God and to procure our escape from eternal Death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our *stead*. For he that dies with an intention to do that *benefit* to another as to save him from Death, doth certainly to all intents and purposes die in his place and *stead*.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the Controversie is at an end; and both sides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phrase and manner of expression: which is to seek a quarrel and an occasion of difference where there is no real ground for it: A thing which ought to be very far from reasonable and peaceable Minds.

For the *Socinians* say, that our *Saviour's* voluntary Obedience and Sufferings did procure his Exaltation at the right hand of God, and Power and Authority to forgive Sins, and to give eternal Life to as many as he pleased: So that they grant that his Obedience and Sufferings, in the meritorious consequence of them, do redound to our *Benefit* and advantage as much as we pretend and say they do; only they are loth in express terms to acknowledge that *Christ* died in our *stead*: And this, for no other reason, that I can imagine, but because they have denied it so often and so long.

But I appeal to the Ingenuity of our *Adversaries*, whether this do not in the last issue come all to one; and be not, on their part, a mere Controversie about words; For suppose a Malefactor condemned to some grievous punishment, and the King's Son to save him from it is contented to submit to great disgrace and sufferings: In reward of which Sufferings the King takes his Son into his Throne and sets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this Malefactor, and upon a fitting Submission and Repentance to advance him to honour: Will not any Man in this Case allow, that the King's Son suffered instead of this Malefactor, and smile at any Man that shall be so nice as to grant that indeed he *suffered* for him, but yet to deny that he was *punish'd* for him, to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obstinately to stand it out that the faults of this Malefactor were not laid upon him, or in any wise so imputed to him that he can be said to have suffered in his *stead*? This is just the Case, and the difference in reality and in the last result of things is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious Argument; in which I take no pleasure, but yet shall be glad if I may be so happy as by any thing that hath been said to contribute towards the putting an end to so unhappy a Controversie, which hath troubled the World so long, and raised such a dust that very few have been able to see clearly through it.

How-

However I cannot dismiss this Argument without making some useful but very short reflection upon this great Doctrine of our Religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a Sacrifice for us, and exposed to such bitter Sufferings and so cruel a Death for the Expiation of our Sins, should create in us the greatest dread and detestation of Sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful transgression and disobedience. For if the guilt of our Sins was done away upon such hard terms and cost the dearly beloved Son of God so much sweat and blood, then surely we ought to take great heed how by our renewed Provocations we renew his Passion, and do what in us lies to *crucify to our selves the Son of God afresh, and to put him to an open shame.*

If God did so terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his Soul for our sakes; if the Son of God was so grievously wounded *for our transgressions*, and so sorely bruised *for our iniquities*: If so fearful a Storm of Vengeance fell upon the most innocent Person that ever was for our Sins, then we have reason to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to Sinners, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing, if it be possible, come upon our selves.*

In this Dispensation of God's Grace and Mercy to Mankind, by the Death of his Son, God seems to have gone to the very extremity of things and almost further than Goodness and Justice will well admit; to afflict Innocency it self to save the Guilty: And if herein God hath expressed his hatred of Sin in such a wonderful way of Love and Kindness to the Sons of Men as looks almost like hatred of Innocency and his own Son: This ought in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curse for us*, and *loved us* to that degree as to *wash us from our Sins in his own Blood*: I say, This ought to beget in us a greater displeasure against Sin, and a more perfect detestation of it, than if we had suffered the punishment due to it, in our own Persons: For in this Case, we could only have been displeased at our Selves and our Sins as the just Cause of our Sufferings: but in the other, we ought to hate Sin as the unhappy occasion of the saddest Misfortune and sorest Calamities to the *best Man*, that ever was, and to our *best Friend*, for our Sins and for our Sakes.

Since then the Son of God hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things* like unto us, *Sin only excepted*; let us aspire as much as is possible, to become like to Him: Above all, let us hate and avoid Sin as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to suffer such bitter things to save us from the Defilement and Dominion of it, from the Punishment and all the dismal consequences of it.

He had no Sin, but God was pleased to *lay upon him the iniquities of us all*, and to *make his Soul an offering for Sin*, and to permit all that to be done to Him which was due to us: He was contented to be sacrificed once for all Mankind, that Men might for ever cease from that inhuman and ineffectual way of sacrificing one another, whereby instead of *expiating* their guilt they did inflame it, and by thinking to make Atonement for their Sins they did in truth add to the number and heinousness of them.

And let us likewise learn from this admirable Pattern, to pity those that are in misery, as *Christ* also hath pitied us; and to *save them that are ready to perish*, for His sake who *came to seek and to save us that were lost.*

Let us, upon all occasions be ready to open our bowels of Compassion towards the Poor; in a thankful imitation of his Grace and Goodness who
for

for our sakes chose to be a Beggar, that we for his sake might not despise the Poor, but might have a tender regard and compassion to those whose Condition in this World does so nearly resemble that in which the *Son of God* thought it fittest for him to appear when he was pleased to become *Man*.

In a word, Let us in the whole course, and in all the actions of our lives, *shew forth the Vertues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light; and hath raised up a mighty Salvation for us, that being delivered from all our spiritual Enemies, from Sin and all the Powers of Darkness we might serve him who hath saved us; walking in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.*

Now, to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: To God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth Unto him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood: And whilst we were Enemies to Him, loved us at such a rate as never any Man did his Friend: To Him, who became Man, that he might bring us to God; and assumed our frail and mortal Nature, that he might cloath us with Immortality and Life: To Him, who was pleased to dwell and live amongst us, that he might teach us how to live: To Him who died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification, and lives for ever to make Intercession for us: To Him, be Glory and Dominion, Thanksgiving and Praise to Eternal Ages. Amen.

S E R.

S E R M O N XLVIII.

Concerning the

Unity of the Divine Nature, and the B. Trinity, &c.

I T I M. II. 5.

For there is one God.

TH E Particle *for* leads us to the consideration of the Context and Occasion of these words, which in short is this. The design of this *Epistle* is to direct *Timothy*, to whom *St. Paul* had committed the Government of the Church of *Ephesus*, how he ought to demean himself in that great and weighty Charge. And at the beginning of this *Chapter* he gives direction concerning *Publick Prayers* in the Church; that *Prayers* and *Thanksgiving* be made for all Men, and for all Ranks and Orders of Men; especially for *Kings* and all that are in Authority, that under them Christians might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

And this he tells us was very suitable to the *Christian Religion*, by which God design'd the Salvation of Mankind; and therefore it must needs be very acceptable to him that we should offer up *Prayers* and *Thanksgivings* to him in behalf of all Men; For this, saith the *Apostle*, is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all*: As if he had said, this universal Charity of Christians, in praying for all Men, must needs be very acceptable to Him to whom we put up our Prayers, God the Father, who sent his Son for the Salvation of all Men: And to Him likewise by whom we offer up our Prayers to God, and is amongst us Christians the only Mediator between God and Men, in virtue of that Price and Ransome which he paid for the Redemption of all Mankind; I say, for this reason it must needs be very acceptable to Him that we should pray for all Men, because he died for all Men, and now that he is in Heaven at the right hand of God intercedes with him for the Salvation of those for whom he died: *There is One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is acceptable to God our Saviour, that we should put up Prayers to Him for all Men, because he desires the Salvation of all Men, and hath sent his Son to purchase the Salvation of all Men, by the Sacrifice of himself; and in virtue of that Sacrifice to be the only Mediator between God and us; I say, though this be the immediate scope and design of these words, yet: they are likewise a direction to us, unto whom we ought to address our Prayers, namely, to God; and by whose mediation and Intercession we ought

ought to put up our Prayers to God the *Father*, namely, by his *Son Jesus Christ*, who is constituted the only *Mediator between God and Men*.

There are several *Propositions* contained in this and the following *verse*; but I shall at present confine my self to the *first*, namely, That *there is One God*, that is, *but One*, as St. Paul elsewhere expresseth it, *There is none other God but One*. And *Moses* lays this as the Foundation of the *Natural Law*, as well as of the *Jewish Religion*, *The Lord he is One God, and there is none besides him*, that is, besides *Jehovah*, whom the People of *Israel* did worship as the only true God. And this the Prophet *Isaiab* perpetually declares in opposition to the *Polytheism* and variety of Gods among the *Heathen*. *I am the first, and am the last and besides me there is no God*. And again, *Is there any God besides me? there is no God, I know not any*: He, who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all things, knows no other God. And our *B. Saviour* makes this the *Fundamental Article* of all Religion, and the knowledge of it necessary to every Man's Salvation; *This, says He, is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*.

The *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is a *Notion* wherein the greatest and the wisest part of Mankind did always agree, and therefore may reasonably be presumed to be either *natural*, or to have sprung from some *Original Tradition* delivered down to us from the *first Parents* of Mankind: I mean, that there is *One Supreme Being*, the *Author* and *Cause* of all things, whom the most ancient of the *Heathen Poets* commonly called the *Father of Gods and Men*. And thus *Aristotle* in his *Metaphysicks* defines God, *the eternal and most excellent, or best of all living Beings*. And this *Notion*, of *One Supreme Being*, agrees very well with that exact *Harmony* which appears in the *Frame* and *Government* of the *World*, in which we see all things conspiring to one *End*, and continuing in one uniform *Order* and *Course*; which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other but a constant and uniform *Cause*; and which to a considering Man does plainly shew, that all things are made and governed by that *One powerful Principle*, and great and wise *Mind* which we call *God*.

But although the generality of Mankind had a *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, yet the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen* plainly shews, that this *Notion*, in process of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehension of a *Plurality* of *Gods*; though in reason it is evident enough, that there can be no more Gods than *One*; and that *One*, who is of infinite Perfection, is as sufficient to all purposes whatsoever, as ten thousand *Deities*, if they were possible, could possibly be; as I shall shew in the following Discourse.

Now this multitude of *Deities*; which the fond *Superstition* and vain *Imagination* of Men had formed to themselves, were by the *Wiser* sort, who being forced to comply with the *Follies* of the People endeavoured to make the best of them, supposed to be either *Parts* of the *Universe* which the *Egyptians*, as *Plutarch* tells us, thought to be the same with *God*; but then the more considerable *Parts* of the *Universe* they parcelled out into several *Deities*; and as the *Ocean* hath several *Names*, according to the several *Coasts* and *Countries* by which it passeth; so they gave several *Names* to this *One Deity* according to the several *Parts* of the *World* which several Nations made the *Objects* of their *Worship*:

Or else, they adored the several *Perfections* and *Powers* of the *One Supreme God* under several *Names* and *Titles*, with regard to the various *Blessings* and *Benefits* which they thought they received from *Him*.

Thus the *Indian Philosophers*, the *Brachmans*, are said to have worshipped the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and he certainly is the most *Worshipful* of

of all sensible Beings, and bids fairest for a *Deity*; especially if he was, as they supposed, animated by a *Spirit* endued with Knowledge and Understanding. And if a Man who had been bred in a dark Cave, should all on the sudden be brought out at Noon-day to behold this visible World; after he had viewed and consider'd it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the *Sun* as the most likely, of all the things he had seen, to be a *Deity*. For if such a Man had any Notion of a *God*, and were to chuse one upon sight, he would without dispute fix upon the *Sun*, and fall down before Him and worship Him.

And *Macrobius* manageth this as his main *Plea* for the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen*; that under all the several *Names* of their *Gods* they worshipped the *Sun*: And this diversity of *Names* was but a more distinct conception and acknowledgment of the many Blessings and Advantages which Mankind receiv'd from Him, and a more particular and Express Adoration of the several *Powers* and *Perfections* which were in Him. And this was the very best defence, and all the tolerable sense which the *Wiseſt* among the *Heathen* could make of the multitude of their *Deities*.

And yet whilst they generally owned *One Supreme Being* that was the Principle and Original of all things, they worshipped several subordinate *Deities* as really distinct from one another. Some of these they fancied to be superior to the rest and to have their residence in *Heaven*; by which *Marſilius Ficinus* supposes *Plato* to mean no more but the Chief of the *Angels*. These were called *Ætæi*, *Dii Superi* and *Dii Cælestes*, superior and heavenly *Gods*: The *Scripture* terms them the *Host of Heaven*, meaning the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, which they supposed to be animated, or at least, to be inhabited by *Angels*, or glorious *Spirits*; whom they called *Gods*.

Other of their *Deities* were accounted much inferior to these, being supposed to be the *Souls* of their deceased *Heroes*; who for their great and worthy Deeds, when they lived upon Earth, were supposed after Death to be translated into the number of their *Gods*. And these were called *Semidei* and *Deastri*, that is, half *Gods* and a sort of *Gods*. And as the other were *Cæstials*, so these were *Δαιμονες ἑρμηνεύοντες*, a kind of *Terrestrial Spirits* that were *Presidents* and *Procurators* of Human Affairs here below; that is, a middle sort of *Divine Powers* that were *Mediators* and *Agents* between *God* and *Men*, and did carry the Prayers and Supplications of Men to God, and bring down the Commands and Blessings of God to Men.

But in the midst of all this Crowd and Confusion of *Deities*, and the various *Superstitions* about them, the *Wiser Heathen*, as *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *Tully*, *Plutarch*, and others preserved a true Notion of *One Supreme God*, whom they defined an infinite Spirit, pure from all Matter and free from all Imperfection: And all the variety of their *Worship* was, as they pretended in excuse of it, but a more particular owning of the various representations of the *Divine Power* and Excellencies which manifested themselves in the World, and of the several communications of Blessings and Favours by them imparted to Men: and *Tertullian* observes, that even when *Idolatry* had very much obscur'd the Glory of the *Sovereign Deity*, yet the greater part of Mankind did still in their common *Forms* of Speech appropriate the Name of *God* in a more especial and peculiar manner to *One*, saying, *If God grant*, *If God please*, and the like.

So that there is sufficient ground to believe, that the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, or the Notion of *One Supreme God*, Creator and Governour of the World, was the Primitive and general belief of Mankind: And that *Polytheism* and *Idolatry* were a corruption and degeneracy from the Original

Notion which Mankind had concerning *God*; as the *Scripture History* doth declare and testify.

And this Account which I have given of the *Heathen Idolatry* doth by no means excuse it. For whatever may be said by way of extenuation in behalf of some few of the wiser and more devout among them, the generality were grossly guilty both of believing *more Gods*, and of worshipping *false Gods*.

And this must needs be a very great Crime, since the *Scripture* every where declares *God* to be particularly *jealous* in this Case, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven Images*. Nay, we may not so much as make use of sensible Images to put us in mind of *God*, lest devout Ignorance, seeing the Worship which wise Men paid towards an *Idol*, should be drawn to terminate their Worship there, as being the very *Deity* it self; which was certainly the Case of the greatest part of the *Heathen World*.

And surely those *Christians* are in no less danger of *Idolatry*, who pay a Veneration to *Images* by kneeling down and praying before them; and in this they are much more inexcusable, because they offend against a much clearer Light; and yet when they go about to justify this Practice are able to bring no other nor better *Pleas* for themselves than the *Heathen* did for their worshipping of *Images*, and for praying to their *inferior Deities*, whom they looked upon as *Mediators* between the *Gods* in Heaven and *Men* upon Earth.

There is but one *Objection*, that I know of, against the general Consent of Mankind concerning the *Unity of God*; and it is this, That there was an ancient Doctrine of some of the most ancient Nations, that there were *two First Causes* or *Principles* of all things; the *one* the cause of all *Good*, and the *other* of all the *Evil* that is in the World: The reason whereof seems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of so contrary nature, as *Good* and *Evil*, could proceed from *one* and the same *Cause*.

And these two *Principles* in several Nations were called by several Names. *Plutarch* says, that among the *Greeks* the *Good Principle* was called *God*, and the *Evil Principle* *Διαιμα*, or the *Devil*. In conformity to which ancient Tradition the *Manichees*, a *Seet* which called themselves *Christians*, did advance two *Principles*, the *one* infinitely *Good*, which they supposed to be the *Original Cause* of all the *good* which is in the World; the *other* infinitely *Evil*, to which they ascribed all the *evils* that are in the World.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient Tradition concerning that *old Serpent* the *Devil*, the Head of the *fallen Angels*, who by tempting our *First Parents* to transgress a positive and express Law of *God* brought *Sin* first into the World and all the *Evils* consequent upon it; of which the *Scripture* gives us a most express and particular account.

And as to the *Notion* of a *Being* infinitely *Evil* into which this Tradition was corrupted, after *Idolatry* had prevail'd in the World, besides that it is a Contradiction, it would likewise be to no purpose to assert two opposite *Principles* of *infinite*, that is, of *equal Force* and *Power*, for two *Infinities* must of necessity be equal to one another; because nothing can be more or greater than *Infinite*, and therefore if two infinite *Beings* were possible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwise.

Now that the *Notion* of a *Principle* infinitely *Evil* is a Contradiction will be very plain, if we consider that what is *infinitely Evil* must in strict Reasoning, and by necessary Consequence, be infinitely imperfect; and therefore infinitely weak, and for that reason, though never so malicious and mischievous, yet being infinitely weak and foolish, could never be in capacity either to contrive mischief or to execute it.

But if it should be admitted, that a Being infinitely mischievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; because the opposite *Principle of infinite Goodness*, being also infinitely Wise and Powerful, they would tie up one another's hands. So that upon this supposition the *Notion of a Deity* must signify just nothing, because by virtue of the eternal opposition and equal conflict of these *two Principles* they would keep one another at a perpetual Bay; and being just an equal Match to one another, the *one* having as much mind and power to do good as the *other* to do evil, instead of being *two Deities* they would be but *two Idols*, able to do neither good nor evil.

And having, I hope now sufficiently clear'd this *Objection*, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this *Principle*, that *there is but one God*, is to the common Reason of Mankind, and to the clearest and most essential Notions which we have of God: And this will appear these *two* ways.

First. By considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more Gods than One.

First, By considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. *Absolute Perfection* which we ascribe to God, as the most essential Notion which Mankind hath always had concerning Him, does necessarily suppose *Unity*; because this is essential to the Notion of a Being that is *absolutely Perfect*, that all Perfection meets and is united in such a Being: But to imagine more Gods, and some Perfections to be in one and some in another, does destroy the most essential Notion which Men have of God, namely, that *He is a Being absolutely Perfect*, that is, as perfect as is possible: Now to suppose some Perfections in one God which are not in another, is to suppose some possible Perfection to be wanting in God, which is a Contradiction to the most natural and the most easie Notion which all Men have of God that he is a Being in whom all Perfections do meet and are united: But if we suppose more Gods, each of which hath all Perfections united in Him, then all but one would be superfluous and needless; and therefore by just and necessary consequence not only *may*, but of necessity *must* be supposed not to be; since *necessary existence* is essential to the *Deity*: and therefore if *but one God* be necessary, there can be no more.

Secondly, From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of the contrary. For suppose there were more Gods, *two* for example: and if there may be *two* there may be a *million*, for we can stop no where: I say, suppose *two Gods*; either these *two* would be in all Perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: If equal and alike in all things, then, as I said before, one of them would be needless and superfluous, and if *one* why not as well the *other*? they being supposed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no necessity at all of the being of a God; and yet it is granted on all hands, that *necessary existence* is essential to the Notion of a *God*: But if they be unequal, that is, *one* of them inferior to and less perfect than the *other*, that which is inferior and less perfect could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that which way soever we turn the thing and look upon it, the Notion of more Gods than One is by its own repugnancy and self-contradiction destructive of it self.

Before I come to apply this *Doctrine* of the *Unity of God*, I must not pass by a very considerable *Difficulty*, which will most certainly arise in every

Man's Mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the *Doctrine* of the *B. Trinity*, or of *three* real *Differences* or *distinct Persons* in *One* and the same *Divine Nature*.

And though this be not a *Difficulty* peculiar only to the *Christian Religion*, as by the generality of those who urge this *Objection* against *Christians* hath been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before *Christianity* appeared in the World, there was a very ancient *Tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathen*, concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Distinctions* in the *Divine Nature*, very nearly resembling the *Christian Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: Yet it cannot be deny'd, but that this *Difficulty* doth in a more especial manner affect the *Christian Religion*; the generality of *Christians*, who do most firmly believe the *Trinity*, believing likewise at the same time, more stedfastly if it be possible, ^{1 Cor. S. 6.} *that there is but one God*. To us, saith St. Paul, that is, to us *Christians*, *there is but one God*. But how can this possibly consist with the common *Doctrine* of *Christians* concerning the *Trinity*, God the *Father*, *Son* and *H. Ghost*, to each of whom they Attribute, as they verily believe the *Scripture* does, the most incommunicable *Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature*? And what is this less in effect than to say, *That there are three Gods*?

For the clearing of this *Difficulty* I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following *Considerations*; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced Judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

- I. I desire it may be well consider'd, that there is a wide difference between the nice *Speculations* of the *Schools*, beyond what is revealed in *Scripture*, concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, and what the *Scripture* only teaches and asserts concerning this *Mystery*. For it is not to be deny'd but that the *Schoolmen*, who abounded in wit and leisure, though very few among them had either exact skill in the *H. Scriptures*, or in *Ecclesiastical Antiquity* and the *Writings* of the *ancient Fathers* of the *Christian Church*: I say, it cannot be deny'd but that these *Speculative* and very acute Men, who wrought a great part of their *Divinity* out of their own Brains, as *Spiders* do *Cobwebs* out of their own bowels, have started a thousand *subtleties* about this *Mystery*, such as no *Christian* is bound to trouble his head withal; much less is it necessary for him to understand those *niceties* which we may reasonably presume that they who talk of them did themselves never thoroughly understand; and least of all is it necessary to believe them. The modesty of *Christians* is contented in *Divine Mysteries* to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curiosity to be *wise above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters; and if any Man will venture to say more, every other Man surely is at his liberty to believe as he sees reason.
- II. I desire it may in the next place be consider'd, that the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, even as it is asserted in *Scripture*, is acknowledged by us to be still a great *Mystery*, and so imperfectly revealed as to be in a great measure incomprehensible by Human Reason. And therefore though some learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great *Mystery* by the strength of *Reason*, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an Attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

All that I ever designed upon this Argument was to make out the credibility of the thing from the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the *Scripture* hath given us; lest by endeavouring to lay the *Difficulties* which are already started about it new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former *Discourses*. Nor indeed do I see that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it. Ser. XLIV.

For in this and the like Cases I take an *Implicit Faith* to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a Revelation. And thus every Man who believes the *H. Scriptures* to be a truly *Divine Revelation*, does *implicitly* believe a great part of the *Prophetical Books of Scripture* and several obscure expressions in those Books, though he do not particularly understand the meaning of all the Predictions and Expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good *Christians* who do not believe and comprehend the Mysteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a *Scholastical* and *Magisterial Judge of Controversies*, who yet if they do heartily embrace the *Doctrines* which are clearly revealed in *Scripture* and live up to the plain *Precepts* of the *Christian Religion*, will I doubt not be very well approved by the great and Just, and by the *Infallibly Infallible Judge* of the World.

III. Let it be further considered, That though neither the word *Trinity*, nor perhaps *Person*, in the sense in which it is used by *Divines* when they treat of this Mystery, be any where to be met with in *Scripture*; yet it cannot be deny'd but that *Three* are there spoken of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, in whose Name every *Christian* is baptiz'd, and to each of whom the highest *Titles* and *Properties* of *God* are in *Scripture* attributed: And these three are spoken with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of *three* several Persons. III.

So that though the word *Trinity* be not found in *Scripture*, yet these *Three* are there expressly and frequently mention'd; and a *Trinity* is nothing but *three* of any thing. And so likewise though the word *Person* be not there expressly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these *Three*. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this term. For since the *H. Spirit* of *God* in *Scripture* hath thought fit in speaking of these *Three* to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish *three* several Persons, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this *Mystery* which purely depends upon *Divine Revelation*, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the *Scripture* doth: And though the word *Person* is now become a *Term of Art*, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the *Scripture* says in other Words.

IV. It deserves further to be considered, That there hath been a very ancient Tradition concerning *three* real Differences or Distinctions in the *Divine Nature*; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the *Christian Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. IV.

Whence

Whence this *Tradition* had its original is not easie upon good and certain grounds to say; but certain it is that the *Jews* anciently had this *Notion*: And that they did distinguish the *Word of God*, and the *H. Spirit of God*, from *Him* who was absolutely called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the *First Principle* of all things; as is plain from *Philo Judæus*, and *Moses Nachmanides*, and others cited by the Learned *Grotius* in his incomparable Book of the *Truth of the Christian Religion*.

L. 5.

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*, who probably enough might have this *Notion* from the *Jews*, did make *three Distinctions* in the *Deity* by the Names of *Essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit*.

So that whatever *Objections* this matter may be liable to, it is not so peculiar a *Doctrine* of the *Christian Religion* as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearness and certainty: And consequently, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have any reason to object it to us *Christians*; especially since they pretend no other ground for it but either their own *Reason*, or an *ancient Tradition* from their *Fathers*: whereas we *Christians* do appeal to express *Divine Revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it singly upon that account.

V. It is besides very considerable, That the *Scriptures* do deliver this *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* without any manner of doubt or question concerning the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*: and not only so, but do most stedfastly and constantly assert that there is but *One God*: And in those very *Texts*, in which these *three Differences* are mentioned, the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is expressly; asserted as where *St. John* makes mention of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, the *Unity* of these *Three* is likewise affirmed, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One*.

VI. It is yet further considerable, That from this *Mystery*, as delivered in *Scripture*, a *Plurality* of *Gods* cannot be infer'd without making the *Scripture* grossly to contradict it self; which I charitably suppose the *Socinians* would be as loath to admit as we our selves are. And if either *Councils*, or *Fathers*, or *Schoolmen*, have so explain'd this *Mystery* as to give any just ground, or so much as a plausible colour for such an Inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the *H. Scriptures*; but rather, as the *Apostle* says in another Case, *Let God be true, and every Man a liar*.

VII. *Vilthly* and *Lastly*, I desire it may be consider'd, That it is not repugnant to *Reason* to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our *Reason*; provided that we have sufficient ground and reason for the belief of them: Especially if they be concerning *God*, who is in his Nature *Incomprehensible*; and we be well assured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that these *Differences* in the *Deity* are *incomprehensible* by our finite understandings; because the *Divine Nature* it self is so, and yet the belief of *that* is the Foundation of all Religion.

There are a great many things in *Nature* which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the *Continuity of Matter*, that is how the parts of it do hang so fast together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are sure that it is so, because we see it every day. So likewise how the small *Seeds* of things contain the whole *Form* and *Nature* of the things from which they proceed and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly see this every year. There

There are many things likewise in our *Selves*, which no Man is able in any measure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the *vital union* of *Soul* and *Body*: Who can imagine by what device or means a *Spirit* comes to be so closely united and so firmly link'd to a *material Body*, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offer'd to Nature? The like may be said of the operations of our several *Faculties* of *Sense* and *Imagination*, of *Memory* and *Reason*, and especially of the *Liberty* of our *Wills*: And yet we certainly find all these *Faculties* in our selves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the several Operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those Operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in our *Selves*, much less can we expect to comprehend things without us; and lest of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and every thing belonging to Him. For *God* himself is certainly the greatest *Mystery* of all other, and acknowledged by Mankind to be in his *Nature*, and in the particular manner of his *Existence*, incomprehensible by Human Understanding. And the reason of this is very evident, because *God* is infinite, and our knowledge and understanding is but finite: And yet no sober Man ever thought this a good reason to call the Being of *God* in question.

The same may be said of *God's* certain knowledge of Future Contingencies which depend upon the uncertain Wills of Free Agents: It being utterly inconceivable how any Understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know before hand that which depends upon the *free Will* of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain Cause.

And yet the *Scripture* doth not only attribute this Foreknowledge to *God*, but gives us also plain Instances of *God's* foretelling such things, many Ages before it happen'd, as could not come to pass but by the Sins of Men, in which we are sure that *God* can have no hand; though nothing can happen without his permission: Such was that most memorable Event of the Death of *Christ*, who, as the *Scripture* tells us, was by wicked hands crucified and slain; and yet even this is said to have happened according to the determinate foreknowledge of *God*, and was punctually foretold by Him some hundreds of years before. Nay, the *Scripture* doth not only ascribe this power and perfection to the *Divine* knowledge, but *natural Reason* hath been forced to acknowledge it, as we may see in some of the wisest of the *Philosophers*. And yet it would puzzle the greatest *Philosopher* that ever was to give any tolerable account how any Knowledge whatsoever can certainly and infallibly foresee an Event through uncertain and contingent Causes. All the reasonable satisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreasonably to suppose that *infinite Knowledge* may have ways of knowing things which our *finite Understandings* can by no means comprehend how they can possibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how a thing should be of it self, and without any Cause of its Being; and yet our Reason compels us to acknowledge this; Because we certainly see that something is, which must either have been of it self and without a Cause, or else something that we do not see must have been of it self and have made all other things: And by this reasoning we are forced to acknowledge a *Deity*, the Mind of Man being able to find no rest but in the acknowledgment of one eternal and Wise Mind as the Principle and First Cause of all other things; and this Principle is that which Mankind do by general consent call *God*. So that *God* hath laid a sure foundation of our acknowledgment

ment of his Being in the Reason of our own Minds. And though it be one of the hardest things in the World to conceive how any thing can be of it self, yet necessity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no : And this being once granted, our Reason, being tired in trying all other ways, will for its own quiet and ease force us at last to fall in with the general apprehension and belief of Mankind concerning a *Deity*.

To give but one *Instance* more ; there is the like Difficulty in conceiving how any thing can be made, out of nothing ; and yet our Reason doth oblige us to believe it : Because *Matter*, which is a very imperfect Being and merely passive, must either always have been of it self ; or else, by the infinite Power of a most perfect and active Being, must have been made out of nothing : Which is much more credible, than that any thing so imperfect as *Matter* is should be of it self : Because that which is of it self cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its Being and Perfection ; for by the same reason that it necessarily is and of it self, it must necessarily have all perfection, which it is certain *Matter* hath not ; and yet necessary Existence is so great a Perfection, that we cannot reasonably suppose any thing that hath this Perfection to want any other.

Thus you see, by these *Instances*, that it is not repugnant to Reason to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whose Existence we are not able to give a particular and distinct account. And much less is it repugnant to Reason to believe those things concerning God which we are very well assured he hath declared concerning Himself, though these things by our Reason should be incomprehensible.

And this is truly the Case as to the matter now under debate : We are sufficiently assured that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine Revelation*, and that this *Mystery* of the *Trinity* is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no sufficient Reason not to believe it : For if this were a good Reason for not believing it, then no Man ought to believe that there is a God, because his Nature is most certainly incomprehensible. But we are assured by many Arguments that there is a God ; and the same natural Reason which assures us that *He is*, doth likewise assure us that *He is incomprehensible* ; and therefore our believing Him to be so doth by no means overthrow our belief of His Being.

In like manner, we are assured by *Divine Revelation* of the truth of this Doctrine of the *Trinity* ; and being once assured of that, our not being able fully to comprehend it is not reason enough to stagger our belief of it. A Man cannot deny what he sees, though the necessary consequence of admitting it may be something which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the Frame of this World which he sees with his Eyes, though from thence it will necessarily follow, that either *that* or something else must be of it self ; which yet, as I said before, is a thing which no Man can comprehend how it can be.

And by the same Reason a Man must not deny what God says, to be true ; though he cannot comprehend many things which God says : As particularly concerning this *Mystery* of the *Trinity*. It ought then to satisfy us that there is sufficient evidence that this doctrine is delivered in *Scripture*, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a Contradiction. For why should our finite understandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real Differences that are consistent with the Unity of an Infinite Being : or to be able fully to explain this *Mystery* by any similitude or resemblance taken from finite Beings ?

But

But before I leave this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the Church of Rome are perpetually objecting to us upon this Occasion. And it is this, That by the same reason that we believe the Doctrine of the Trinity, we may and must receive that of Transubstantiation. God forbid: Because of all the Doctrines that ever were in any Religion, this of Transubstantiation is certainly the most abominably absurd.

However this Objection plainly shews how fondly and obstinately they are addicted to their own Errors, how mishapen and monstrous soever; in so much, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how absurd soever, should be call'd in question, they will question the truth even of Christianity it self; and if we will not take in Transubstantiation, and admit it to be a necessary Article of the Christian Faith, they grow so sullen and desperate that they matter not what becomes of all the rest: And rather than not have their Will of us in that which is controverted, they will give up that which by their own confession is an undoubted Article of the Christian Faith, and not controverted on either Side; except only by the Socinians, who yet are hearty Enemies to Transubstantiation, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage.

But I shall endeavour to return a more particular Answer to this Objection, and such a one as I hope will satisfy every considerate and unprejudic'd Mind, that after all this confidence and swaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reason either for the receiving or for the rejecting of these two Doctrines of the Trinity and Transubstantiation.

First, There is not equal reason for the belief of these Two Doctrines. This Objection, if it be of any force, must suppose that there is equal evidence and proof from Scripture for these two Doctrines: But this we utterly deny, and with great reason; because it is no more evident from the words of Scripture, that the Sacramental Bread is substantially changed into Christ's natural Body by virtue of those words, *This is my Body*, than it is, that Christ is substantially changed into a natural Vine by virtue of those words, *I am the true Vine*; or than that the Rock in the Wilderness, of which the Israelites drank, was substantially changed into the Person of Christ, because it is expressly said, *That Rock was Christ*; or than that the Christian Church is substantially changed into the natural Body of Christ, because it is in express terms said of the Church, *That it is his Body*.

Joh. 15. 1.
Eph. 1. 23.

But besides this, several of their own most learned Writers have freely acknowledged that Transubstantiation can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from Scripture: But this the Writers of the Christian Church did never acknowledge concerning the Trinity and the Divinity, of Christ; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable Testimonies of Scripture for the proof of these Doctrines. And then the whole force of the Objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am sure God says, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the same reason to believe the greatest Absurdity in the World, though I have no manner of assurance of any Divine Revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we understand not Transubstantiation, yet we very well understand what they would have, but cannot grant it; because there is not equal reason to believe two things for one of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

Secondly, Neither is there equal reason for the rejecting of these two Doctrines. This the Objection supposes, which yet cannot be supposed but upon one or both of these two grounds: Either because these two Doctrines are equally incomprehensible, or because they are equally loaded with Absurdities and Contradictions.

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The *First* is no good ground of *rejecting* any *Doctrine*, merely because it is *incomprehensible*: as I have abundantly shew'd already. But besides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of *Sense*, and *Mysteries* concerning God; and it does by no means follow, that, if a Man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot *comprehend*, he hath no reason afterwards to believe what he himself *sees*. This is a most unreasonable and destructive way of arguing, because it strikes at the foundation of all Certainty, and sets every Man at liberty to deny the most plain and evident *Truths* of *Christianity*, if he may not be humour'd in having the absurdest things in the World admitted for true. The next step will be to persuade us, that we may as well deny the Being of God because his Nature is *incomprehensible* by our Reason, as deny *Transubstantiation* because it evidently *contradicts* our Senses.

2dly. Nor are these *two Doctrines* loaded with the like *Absurdities* and *Contradictions*: So far from this, that the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, as it is delivered in the *Scriptures*, and hath already been explain'd, hath no Absurdity or Contradiction either involv'd in it, or necessarily consequent upon it: But the *Doctrine* of *Transubstantiation* is big with all imaginable Absurdity and Contradiction. And their own *Schoolmen* have sufficiently expos'd it; especially *Scotus*, and he designed to do so, as any Man that attentively reads him may plainly discover: For in his *Disputation* about it he treats this *Doctrine* with the greatest contempt, as a new Invention of the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent III.* To the *Decree* of which *Council* concerning it he seems to pay a formal submission, but really derides it as contrary to the common *Sense* and *Reason* of Mankind, and not at all supported by *Scripture*; as any one may easily discern that will carefully consider his manner of handling it and the result of his whole *Disputation* about it.

And now suppose there were some appearance of Absurdity and Contradiction in the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* as it is delivered in *Scripture*, must we therefore believe a *Doctrine* which is not at all reveal'd in *Scripture*, and which hath certainly in it all the *absurdities* in the World, and all the *Contradictions* to *Sense* and *Reason*; and which once admitted, doth at once destroy all Certainty? Yes, say they, why not? since we of the *Church* of *Rome* are satisfy'd that this *Doctrine* is reveal'd in *Scripture*; or, if it be not, is defin'd by the Church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between *us* and *them*, but even among themselves, at least till the *Council* of *Trent*? And this upon such unreasonable terms that we must either yield this *Point* to them, or else renounce a *Doctrine* agreed on both Sides to be reveal'd in *Scripture*.

To shew the unreasonableness of this proceeding, Let us suppose a *Priest* of the *Church* of *Rome* pressing a *Jew* or *Turk* to the belief of *Transubstantiation*, and because one kindness deserves another, the *Jew* or *Turk* should demand of him the belief of all the *Fables* in the *Talmud*, or in the *Alchoran*; since none of these, nor indeed all of them together, are near so absurd as *Transubstantiation*: Would not this be much more reasonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no Absurdity, how monstrous and big soever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an Understanding in which a Breach hath been already made wide enough to admit *Transubstantiation*. The *Priests* of *Baal* did not half so much deserve to be expos'd by the *Prophet* for their Superstition and Folly, as the *Priests* of the *Church* of *Rome* do for this senseless and stupid *Doctrine* of theirs with a hard Name. I shall only add this one thing more, That if this *Doctrine* were

were possible to be true, and clearly prov'd to be so; yet it would be evidently useless and to no purpose. For it pretends to change the substance of one thing into the substance of another thing that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpose? Not to make the *Body* of Christ, for that was already in Being; and the Substance of the *Bread*, is lost, nothing of it remaineth but *Accidents*, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the Substance is destroy'd and gone.

All that now remains, is to make some *practical Inferences* from this *Doctrine* of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. And they shall be the same which God himself makes by *Moses*, which *Text* is also cited by our *Saviour*, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* So that according to our *Saviour* the whole Duty of Man, the love of God, and of our *Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. Deut. 6. 4.
Mark 12.
29, 30, 31.

I. The love of God; *The Lord thy God is one Lord*, therefore thou shalt love Him with all thy heart, &c. this is the first and great Commandment: And it comprehends in it all the Duties of the first Table as naturally flowing from it. As that we should serve him only, and pay no Religious Worship to any but to Him. For to pay Religious Worship to any thing is to make it a God, and to acknowledge it for such: And therefore God being but One, we can give Religious Worship to none but to Him only. And among all the parts of Religious Worship none is more peculiarly appropriated to the Deity than solemn Invocation and Prayer. For he to whom Men address their Requests, at all times, and in all places, must be supposed to be always every-where present, to understand all our desires and wants, and to be able to supply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewise from the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* may be inferr'd, that we should not worship God by any sensible Image or Representation: Because God being a singular Being there is nothing like Him, or that can without injuring and debasing his most spiritual and perfect and immense Being be compared to Him: As He himself speaks in the Prophet, *To whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore with no Distinction whatsoever can it be lawful to give Religious Worship, or any part of it, to any but God: We can pray to none but to Him, because He only is every-where present, and only knows the Hearts of all the children of Men; which Solomon gives as the reason why we should address our Supplications to God only, who dwelleth in the Heavens. Isa. 46. 5.
1 Kings 8.
39.

So that the Reason of these two Precepts is founded in the *Unity* and *Singularity* of the *Divine Nature*, and unless there be more Gods than One, we must Worship Him only, and pray to none but Him: Because we can give Invocation to none but to Him only whom we believe to be God; as St. Paul reasons, *How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. 10.
14.

II. The love likewise of our Neighbour is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, and may be inferr'd from it: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One Lord*, therefore thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. And the Apostle gives this reason why Christians should be at unity among themselves; *There is One God and Father of all*, and therefore we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace; that is, live in mutual love and peace. Eph. 4. 6.

The Prophet likewise assigns this reason why all Mankind should be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, *Have we not all One Father? hath not one God created us? Why do we then deal treacherously every man against his brother?*

Mal. 2. 10.

And therefore when we see such hatred and enmity among Men, such divisions and animosities among Christians, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, *Is Christ divided?* that we cannot agree about serving him; either all to serve him one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I say, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, *Is Christ divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?* Is there not One God, and are we not all his Off-spring? Are we not all the Sons of Adam, *who was the Son of God?* So that if we trace our selves to our Original, we shall find a great nearness and equality among Men: And this equality that we are all God's Creatures and Image, and that the One only God is the Father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, and peace, and equity in our dealings one with another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions of strong and weak, of rich and poor, of wise and foolish, of base and honourable, can be to encourage Men to any thing of Insolence, Injustice, and inequality of dealing one towards another. Because that wherein we all agree, that we are the Creatures and Children of God, and have all one common Father, is essential and constant; but those things wherein we differ are accidental and mutuale, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken concerning the first Proposition in the Text, *There is one God: To Him, Father, Son, and H. Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever: Amen.*

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THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

BEING, I hope, for the remainder of my Life, released from that irksome and unpleasant work of Controversie and Wrangling about Religion, I shall now turn my Thoughts to something more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of True Religion, to the happiness of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.

I have no intention to reflect upon any that stand up in defence of the Truth, and contend earnestly for it, endeavouring in the spirit of meekness to reclaim those that are in Error. For I doubt not but a very good Man may upon several occasions be almost unavoidably engaged in Controversies of Religion; and if he have a Head clear and cool enough, so as to be Master of his own Notions and Temper in that hot kind of Service, he may therein do considerable advantage to the Truth: Though a Man that hath once drawn Blood in Controversie, as Mr. Mede expresseth it, is seldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.

For this reason a good Man should not be very willing, when his Lord comes, to be found so doing, and as it were beating his fellow-servants: And all Controversie, as it is usually managed, is little better. A good Man would be loth to be taken out of the World reeking hot from a sharp Contention with a perverse Adversary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable Regions of the Blessed, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever.

I know not whether St. Paul, who had been taking up into the third Heavens, did by that Question of his, Where is the Disputer of THIS WORLD? intend to insinuate, that this wrangling work hath place only in this World, and upon this Earth where only there is a Dust to be raised; but will have no place in the Other. But whether St. Paul intended this or not, the thing it self I think is true, that in the other
World

World all things will be clear and past dispute. To be sure, among the Blessed; and probably also among the Miserable, unless fierce and furious Contentions, with great Heat without Light, about things of no moment and concernment to them, should be design'd for a part of their Torment.

As to the following Sermons, I am sensible that the Style of them is more loose and full of words, than is agreeable to just and exact Discourses: But so I think the Style of Popular Sermons ought to be. And therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chusing rather that they should appear in that native simplicity in which, so many years ago, they were first fram'd, than dress'd up with too much Care and Art. As they are, I hope, the candid and ingenuous Readers will take them in good part.

And I do heartily wish, that all that are concern'd in the respective Duties, treated on in the following Sermons, would be persuaded so to lay them to heart as to put them effectually in practice: That how much soever the Reformation of this corrupt and degenerate Age in which we live is almost utterly to be despair'd of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future Times, by seeing the foundation of a better World begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the Duties here mention'd: That by this means the Generations to come may know God, and the Children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

I have great reason to be sensible how fast the infirmities of Age are coming upon me, and therefore must work the Works of Him, whose Providence hath placed me in the Station wherein I am, whilst it is Day, because the Night cometh when no man can work.

I knew very well, before I enter'd upon this great and weighty Charge, my own manifold defects, and how unequal my best abilities were for the due discharge of it; but I did not feel this so sensibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore that I might make some small amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to spare from almost perpetual business of one kind or other, than in preparing something for the Publick that might be of use to recover the decayed Piety and Vertue of the present Age; in which iniquity doth so much abound, and the Love of God and Religion is grown so cold.

To this end I have chosen to publish these plain Sermons and to recommend them to the serious perusal and faithful practice both of the Pastors and People committed to my Charge; earnestly beseeching Almighty God, that by his Blessing they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are sincerely design'd.

S E R.

S E R M O N XLIX.

Concerning

Resolution and Stedfastness in Religion.

Preached at

St. Lawrence-Jewry, June the 3d. 1684.

J O S H. XXIV. 15.

--But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

AFTER *Joshua* had brought the People of *Israel* into the promised Land and settled them in the quiet Possession of it, his great desire was to establish them in the true Religion, namely, in the Worship of the *One true God*, who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, and giving them the Possession of that good Land, the Land of *Canaan*.

And now finding himself weak and declining, being an hundred and ten Years old, and fearing least after his death the People should fall off from the true Religion to the Worship of Idols, he like a wise and good Governour considers with himself what course he had best to take to keep them firm and stedfast in their Religion, and to prevent their defection to the Idolatry, of the Nations round about them.

And to this end he calls a general Assembly of all *Israel*, that is, ^{chap. 23. v. 1.} of the Elders, and Heads, and Judges, and Officers of the several Tribes; and in a very wise and eloquent Speech represents to them in what a miraculous manner God had driven out the Nations before them, much greater and stronger Nations than they, and had given them their Land to possess it. And in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promised to them.

And therefore they ought to take great heed to themselves, to love God, and to serve Him; and if they did not, he tells them that it should come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good Land which the Lord your God hath given you. ^{chap. 23. 15.}

After this, he calls them together a second time, and gives them a brief historical Account and deduction of the great Mercies of God to them and their Fathers, from the days of *Abraham*, whom he had called out from among his Idolatrous Kindred and Countrymen, unto that Day.

From the consideration of all which, he earnestly exhorts them to renew their Covenant with God; and for his particular satisfaction, before he left the World, solemnly to promise that they would for ever serve God and forsake the service of Idols: Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity

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cerity and in truth : And put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt ; and serve ye the Lord.

And then in the *Text*, by a very elegant *Scheme* of Speech he does, as it were, once more set them at liberty ; and, as if they had never engaged themselves to God by Covenant before he leaves them to their free choice : *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve ; whether the Gods whom your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose Land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would serve the true God, or not ; but to insinuate to them that Religion ought to be their free choice : And likewise, that the true Religion hath those real advantages on its Side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate Man's choice : *If it seem evil unto you ;* as if he had said, if after all the demonstrations which God hath given of his Miraculous Presence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you by bringing you out of the *Land of Egypt*, and the *House of Bondage* by so outstretched an Arm ; and by driving out the Nations before you, and giving you their Land to possess : If after all this, you can think it fit to quit the service of *this God*, and to worship the *Idols* of the Nations whom you have subdued, those vanquished and baffled Deities : If you can think it reasonable so to do, but surely you cannot ; then take your choice : *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own Resolution, which he hopes will also be theirs ; and as he had heretofore been their *Captain*, so now he offers himself to be their *Example* : But whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fix'd and immovable in this Resolution ; *But as for ME and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

In effect he tells them ; I have propos'd the best Religion to your choice, and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all stedfastly adhere to it. It is so reasonable and wise, so much your Interest and your Happiness to do it. But if you should do otherwise, if you should be so weak as not to discern the Truth, so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it : Though you should all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worship of Idols ; I for my part am stedfastly resolved what to do : In a case so manifest, in a matter so reasonable, no Number, no Example shall prevail with me to the contrary ; I will, if need be, stand alone in that which is so evidently and unquestionably Right : And though this whole Nation should revolt all at once from the Worship of the true God, and join with the rest of the World in a false Religion and in the Worship of Idols ; and mine were the only Family left in all *Israel*, nay in the whole World, that continued to worship the God of *Israel*, I would still be of the same mind ; I would still persist in this Resolution, and act according to it ; *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*

A Resolution truly worthy of so great a Prince and so good a Man : In which he is a double Pattern to us.

First, Of the brave Resolution of a good Man, namely, That if there were occasion, and things were brought to that Extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion : *As for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

Secondly, Of the pious Care of a good Father and Master of a Family, to train up those under his Charge in the true Religion and Worship of God ; *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

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I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the *First* of these, namely,

I. Of the brave Resolution of a *good Man*, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuse you this day*, says *Joshua*, *whom you will serve; but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.* *Joshua* here puts the case at the utmost extremity, That not only the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and all the lesser Nations round about them, and in whose Land they dwelt, were all long since revolted to *Idolatry*, and pretended great Antiquity and long Prescription for the Worship of their false Gods. But he supposeth yet further, That the only true and visible Church of God then known in the World, the People of *Israel*, should likewise generally revolt and forsake the Worship of the *true God*, and cleave to the service of *Idols*: Yet in this Case, if we could suppose it to happen, he declares his firm and stedfast Resolution to adhere to the Worship of the *true God*: And though all others should fall off from it, that He would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion: *But as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

In the handling of this Argument I shall do these *two* things.

First, I shall consider the *matter* of this Resolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to vindicate the *reasonableness* of this Resolution from the *Objections* to which this singular and peremptory kind of Resolution may seem liable.

First, I shall consider the *matter* of this Resolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

I. The *matter* of this Resolution. *Joshua* here resolves, that if need were and things were brought to that pass, he would stand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion. And this is not a mere Supposition of an impossible Case, which can never happen: For it may, and hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World.

There hath been a general Apostacy of some great part of God's Church from the Belief and Profession of the true Religion to *Idolatry*, and to *damnable Errors and Heresies*: And some good Men have, upon the matter, stood alone in the open Profession of the true Religion, in the midst of this general Defection from it.

Elijah in that general Revolt of the People of *Israel*, when they had *foraken the Covenant of the Lord, and broken down his Altars, and slain his Prophets*, and *he only*, as he thought, *was left to stand alone*: I say, in this Case when, as he verily believ'd, he had no body to stand by him, *he was very* ^{1 King. 18.} *zealous for the Lord God of Hosts*, and with an undaunted courage stood up ^{18.} for the Worship of the true God, and reproved *Ahab* to his face for his defection to the Worship of Idols.

And those *three brave Youths*, in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, did in the like ^{chap. 3.} resolute and undaunted manner refuse to obey the Command of the great King *Nebuchadnezzar*, to worship the Image which he had set up; when all others Submitted and paid Honour to it: Telling him plainly, *If it be so, our* ^{v. 17, 18.} *God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand: If not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image which thou hast set up.*

In like manner, and with the same Spirit and Courage, *Daniel* withstood the Decree of *Darius*, which forbid Men to ask a Petition of any God or Man

for thirty days, save of the king only; and this under the pain of being cast in-
 Dan. 6. 7. to the Den of Lions: and when all others gave Obedience to it, he set open
 the windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem, and kneeled down upon his knees
 v. 10. three times a day, and pray'd and gave thanks, as he did afore time.

In the prevalency of the *Arian* Heresie *Athanasius* almost stood alone in the profession and maintenance of the Truth. And in the Reign of *Antichrist* the true Church of God is represented by a Woman flying into the *Wilderness*, and living there in obscurity for a long time; insomuch that the Professors of the Truth should hardly be found. And yet during that Degeneracy of so great a Part of the *Christian* Church, and the prevalency of *Antichrist* for so many Ages, some few in every Age did appear who did resolutely own the Truth and bear Witness to it with their Blood: But these did almost stand alone and by themselves, like a few scattered Sheep wandering up and down in a wide *Wilderness*.

Thus in the height of *Popery*, *Wickliffe* appear'd here in *England*; and *Hierome* of *Prague* and *John Huss* in *Germany* and *Bohemia*. And in the beginning of the *Reformation*, when *Popery* had quite over-run these *Western* Parts of the World and subdu'd her Enemies on every side, and *Antichrist* sat securely in the quiet possession of his Kingdom; *Luther* arose, a bold and rough Man, but a fit *Wedge* to cleave in sunder so hard and knotty a *Block*; and appear'd stoutly against the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the Church of *Rome*; and for a long time stood alone, and with a most invincible Spirit and Courage maintain'd his ground and resisted the united malice and force of *Antichrist* and his *Adherents*; and gave him so terrible a Wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a Man to stand alone, or with a very few adhering to him and standing by him, is not a mere imaginary Supposition, but a Case that hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World. Let us then proceed to consider in the

2d. place, The due limits and bounds of this peremptory Resolution. In all matters of Faith and Practice which are plain and evident either from *Natural Reason*, or from *Divine Revelation*, this Resolution seems to be very reasonable: But in things doubtful a modest Man, and every Man hath reason to be so, would be very apt to be stagger'd by the Judgment of a very Wise Man; and much more of any such, and especially by the unanimous Judgment of the generality of Men; the general Voice and Opinion of Mankind being next to the Voice of God himself.

For in matters of an indifferent nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, such as are many of the *Circumstances* and *Ceremonies* of God's Worship, a Man would not be singular, much less stiff and immovable in his singularity; but would be apt to yield and surrender himself to the general Vote and Opinion, and to comply with the common Custom and Practice; and much more with the Rules and Constitutions of Authority, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical. Because in things lawful and indifferent, we are bound by the Rules of Decency and Civility not to thwart the general Practice; and by the Commands of God, we are certainly obliged to obey the lawful Commands of lawful Authority.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of Sense or Reason, or to the Word of God, a Man would complement no Man, or Number of Men; nor would he pin his Faith upon any Church in the World; much less upon any single Man, no not the Pope; no, though there were never so many probable Arguments brought for the proof of his *Infallibility*.

In this Case, a Man would be *singular*, and stand alone against the whole World : against the wrath and rage of a *King* and all the terrors of his *fiery Furnace* ; as in other matters, a Man would not believe all the *Learned Men* in the World against the clear evidence of *Sense* and *Reason*. If all the great *Mathematicians* of all Ages, *Archimedes*, and *Euclid*, and *Apollonius*, and *Diophantus*, &c. could be supposed to meet together in a *General Council*, and should there declare in the most *solemn* manner, and give it under their *Hands* and *Seals*, that *twice two did not make four, but five* ; this would not move me in the least to be of their mind ; nay, I who am no *Mathematician* would maintain the contrary, and would persist in it without being in the least startled by the positive Opinion of these great and *learned Men* ; and should most certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their Wits, or that they were byas'd by some Interest or other, and swayed against the clear evidence of Truth and the full conviction of their own Reason to make such a determination as this. They might indeed over-rule the Point by their Authority, but in my inward judgment I should still be where I was before.

Just so in matters of *Religion*, if any *Church*, though with never so glorious and confident a pretence to *Infallibility*, should declare for *Transubstantiation*, that is, that the *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Sacrament*, by virtue of the *Consecration* of the *Priest*, are substantially changed into the *natural Body* and *Blood* of *Christ* ; this is so notoriously contrary both to the *Sense* and *Reason* of Mankind, that a Man should chuse to stand single in the opposition of it, and laugh at or rather pity the rest of the World that could be so servilely blind as seemingly to conspire in the belief of so *monstrous* an *Absurdity*.

And in like manner, if any Church should declare, that *Images* are to be Worshipped, or that the Worship of God is to be performed in an *unknown Tongue* ; and that the *H. Scriptures*, which contain the Word and Will of God, and teach Men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal Salvation, are to be lock'd up and kept concealed from the People in a Language which they do not understand, lest if they were permitted the free use of them in their *Mother Tongue* they should know more of the Mind and Will of God than is convenient for the common People to know, whose *Devotion* and *Obedience* to the Church does mainly depend upon their *Ignorance* : Or should declare, that the *Sacrifice* of *Christ* was not offer'd *once for all*, but is and ought to be repeated ten Millions of times every Day : And that the People ought to receive the *Communion* in *one kind only*, and the *Cup* by no means to be trusted with them for fear the *Profane Beards* of the *Laity* should drink of it : And that the *saving efficacy* of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the *intention* of the *Priest*, without which the Receiver can have no benefit by them : These are all of them so plainly contrary to *Scripture*, and most of them in *Reason* so absurd, that the Authority of no Church whatsoever can oblige a Man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that being evidently contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel, though an *Apostle*, or an *Angel from Heaven* should declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. Paul's Authority and Warrant, who speaking of some that perverted the Gospel of *Christ* by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, says he, *or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed: As we said before, so say I now again, though an Apostle, though an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed.* You see he repeats Gal. 1. 7, 8, 9 it over again, to express not only his own confident assurance, but the certainty

certainty of the thing. And here is an *Anathema* with a witness, which we may confidently oppose to all the *Anathema's* which the *Council of Trent* hath so liberally denounced against all those who shall presume to gainsay these *New Doctrines* of their Church; which are in truth *another Gospel*, than that which our *B. Saviour* and his *Apostles* taught: And yet on their Side there is neither an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel from Heaven* in the Case.

To give but one *Instance* more: If *Bellarmino* shall tell me, as he expressly does, That if the *Pope* should declare *Virtue* to be *Vice*, and *Vice* to be *Virtue*, I were bound to believe him unless I would sin against *Conscience*: And if all the *World* should say the same that *Bellarmino* does, namely, that this *Infallible Declarer* of *Virtue* and *Vice* were to be believed and followed; yet I could not possibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable Reason; because if *Virtue* and *Vice* be all one, then Religion is nothing; since the main Design of Religion is to teach men the difference between *Virtue* and *Vice*, and to oblige them to practise the one and to refrain from the other: And if Religion be nothing, then Heaven and Hell are nothing; And if Heaven be nothing, then an *infallible Guide* thither is of no use and to no manner of purpose; because he is a Guide no whither, and so his great *Office* ceases and falls of it self.

And now lest any should think me singular in this *Affertion*, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the single Judgment of private Persons, and too little to the Authority of a Church, I will produce the deliberate Judgment of a very Learned Man and a great Assessor of the Church's Authority, concerning the matter I am now speaking of: I mean Mr. *Hooker*, in his deservedly admired *Book of Ecclesiastical Policy*. His words are these, I grant, says he, that Proof derived from the Authority of Man's Judgment is not able to work that Assurance which doth grow by stronger proof: and therefore although ten thousand General Councils should set down one and the same *Definitive Sentence* concerning any Point of Religion whatsoever, yet one *Demonstrative Reason* alledged, or one *Testimony* cited from the Word of God himself to the contrary, could not chuse but oversway them all: In as much as for them to be deceived it is not so impossible, as it is that *Demonstrative Reason* or *Divine Testimony* should deceive.

And again, For men, says he, to be tyed and led by Authority, as it were with a kind of Captivity of Judgment, and though there be Reason to the contrary not to listen to it, but follow like Beasts the first in the Herd, this were *Brutish*.

Again, That the Authority of Men should prevail with Men, either against or above Reason is no part of O U R Belief. Companies of Learned Men, though they be never so great and Reverend, are to yield unto Reason, the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the simplicity of the Person which doth alledge it; but being found to be sound and good, the bare Opinion of men to the contrary must of necessity stoop and give place. And this he delivers not only as his own particular Judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the Judgment of the Church of England.

I have produced these clear and positive Testimonies of so learned and judicious a Person, and of so great esteem in our Church, on purpose to prevent any misapprehension, as if by this Discourse I intended to derogate from the Authority of the Church and her just and reasonable Determinations, in things nowise contrary to plain Reason or the Word of God. And beyond this pitch no judicious Protestant, that I know of, ever strain'd the Authority of the Church. I proceed now in the

Second place, to vindicate the *Reasonableness* of this *Resolution* from the *Objections* to which this *singular* and *peremptory* kind of *Resolution* may seem liable; as

First, It may very speciously be said, that this does not seem modest Object. 1. for a man to set up his own private Judgment against the general Suffrage and Vote. And it is very true, as I said before, that about things *indifferent* a man should not be stiff and singular; and in things *doubtful* and *obscure* a man should not be over-confident of his own Judgment, and insist peremptorily upon it against the general Opinion: But in things that are plain and evident, either from *Scripture* or *Reason*, it is neither immodesty, nor a culpable singularity, for a man to stand alone in the defence of the Truth. Because in such a Case a man does not oppose his own single and private Judgment to the Judgment of *Many*, but the common Reason of Mankind and the Judgment of God plainly declared in his Word.

If the generality of men should turn *Atheists* and *Infidels*, and should deny the *Being* of God, or his *Providence*; the *Immortality* of men's Souls, and the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another World: Or should deny the Truth of the *Gospel* and of the *Christian Religion*, it would not certainly be any breach of modesty for a man to appear single, if no body else would stand by him, in the resolute defence of these great Truths.

In like manner, when a whole Church, though never so large and numerous, shall conspire together to corrupt the *Christian Religion* so far as to impose upon Mankind, under the name of *Christian Doctrines* and *Articles of Faith*, things plainly contrary to the Sense and reason of Mankind, and to the clear and express Word of God, why must a Man needs be thought immodest, if he oppose such gross Errors and Corruptions of the *Christian Doctrine*? And what reason have the *Church of Rome* to talk of modesty in this Case, when they themselves have the face to impose upon Mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man else sees? As they do in their Doctrine of Transubstantiation: And to require of them to do what God hath expressly forbidden, as in the Worship of *Images*; besides a great many other *Idolatrous Practices* of that Church; To deny the People the free use of the *H. Scriptures*, and the *publick Service* of God in a *known Tongue*; contrary to the very end and design of all Religion, and in affront to the common Reason and Liberty of Mankind.

Secondly, It is pretended that it is more prudent for private Persons to err Object. 2. with the Church, than to be so pertinacious in their own Opinions. To which I answer, that it may indeed be pardonable in some Cases to be led into mistake by the Authority of those to whose Judgment and Instruction we ought to pay a great deference and submission, Provided always it be in things which are not plain and necessary; but surely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great soever, in matters of Religion which are of moment, merely for *Numbers* sake: But to comply with the *known Errors* and *Corruptions* of any Church whatsoever is certainly damnable.

Thirdly, It is pretended yet further, that men shall sooner be excused in Object. 3. following the Church, than any particular Man or *Sect*. To this I answer, that it is very true if the matter be doubtful, and especially if the Probabilities be equal, or near equal on both Sides: But if the Error be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse to have followed any number of Men, or any Church whatsoever. For here the competition is not between Men and Men, but between God and Men: And in this Case we must forsake all Men

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to follow God and his Truth. *Thou shalt in no wise follow a Multitude in a known Error*, is a Rule which in Reason is of equal obligation with that *Divine Law*, *Thou shalt in no wise follow a Multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, because to *comply* with a *known Error* is certainly to *do Evil*.

And this very *Objection* the *Jews* made against our *B. Saviour* and the *Doctrine* which He taught, that the *Guides* and *Governours* of the *Jewish Church* did utterly differ from *Him*, and were of a contrary mind, *Have any of the Rulers*, say they, *believed on him*? What? will you be wiser than your *Rulers* and *Governours*? What? follow the *Doctrine* of *one single Man* against the unanimous *Judgment* and *Sentence* of the *Great Sanhedrim*, to whom the *Trial of Doctrines* and pretended *Prophets* doth of right belong?

But, as plausible as this *Objection* may seem to be, it is to be considered that in a corrupt and degenerate Church the *Guides* and *Rulers* of it are commonly the worst, and the most deeply engaged in the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of it. They brought them in at first; and their *Successors*, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concern'd to uphold and maintain them: And so long a *Prescription* gives a kind of *Sacred Stamp* even to *Error*, and an *Authority* not to be opposed and resisted.

And thus it was in the corrupt State of the *Jewish Church*, in our *Saviour's* Time: And so likewise in that great Degeneracy of the *Christian Church*, in the Times of *Popery*, *their Rulers made them to err*: Inasmuch that when *Martin Luther* appeared in opposition to the *Errors* and *Superstitions* of that Church, and was hard prest with this very *Objection* which the *Pharisees* urged against our *Saviour*, he was forc'd to bolt out a kind of *unmannerly Truth*, *Religio nunquam magis pericliatur quàm inter Reverendissimos*; *Religion*, says he, *is never in greater hazard and worse treated, than amongst the most Reverend*; meaning the *Pope* and his *Cardinals*, and all the *Romish Hierarchy* who had their dependance upon them.

Objec. 4.

Fourthly, It is *Objected*, That as on the one hand there may be danger of *Error* in following blindly the Belief of the Church, so on the other hand there is as great a danger of *Schism* in forsaking the communion of the Church upon pretence of *Errors* and *Corruptions*. Very true; but where great *Errors* and *Corruptions* are not only pretended, but are real and evident: and where our *Compliance* with those *Errors* and *Corruptions* is made a *necessary Condition* of our *Communion* with that Church: In that Case, the guilt of *Schism*, how great a Crime soever it be, doth not fall upon those who forsake the *Communion* of that Church, but upon those who drive them out of it by the *sinful Conditions* which they impose upon them.

And this is truly the Case between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*, as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all Occasions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themselves of those gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* which have been charged upon them, and which they require of all their *Members* as *necessary Conditions* of *Communion* with them here, and of *eternal Salvation* hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any are contained in the *Bible*, as every body would see if they durst but let every body read it. The *Worship of Images* is there as plainly forbidden in the *Decalogue*, as *Murder* and *Adultery* are. The *Communion* in both Kinds is as express an *Institution* of our *Saviour*, as any in all the *New Testament*: and even as the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* it self; only that Church pretends to a *Dispensing Power*, as a *Privilege inherent* in their Church, and inseparable from it.

And

And, to add but one *Instance* more; *Publick Prayers*, and the *Service* of God in an *unknown Tongue*, are as plainly and fully declared against by St. Paul in a long *Chapter* upon this single Argument, as any one thing in all his *Epistles*.

These things are plain and undeniable, and being so, are a full justification not only of the *Church of England*, in the *Reformation* which She thought fit to make within her self from the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Church of Rome*; but likewise of *particular Persons* who have at any time for the same Reasons withdrawn themselves from Her Communion, in any of the *Popish Countries*: Yea though that *single Person* should happen to be in those Circumstances that he could not have the opportunity of holding Communion with any *other Church*, that was free from those *Errors* and *Corruptions*, and which did not impose them as *necessary Conditions* of *Communion*.

For if any *Church* fall off to *Idolatry*, every good *Christian* not only may, but ought to forsake *Her Communion*; and ought rather to stand single and alone in the Profession of the pure and true Religion, than to continue in the *Communion* of a *corrupt* and *Idolatrous Church*.

I know that some Men are so fond of the *Name* of a *Church* that they can very hardly believe that any thing which bears that glorious *Title* can miscarry or do any thing so much amiss as to give just occasion to any of her *Members* to break off from *Her Communion*: What? *the Church* err? That is such an *Absurdity*, as is by many thought sufficient to put any *Objection* out of countenance. That the *whole Church*, that is, that *all the Christians* in the World should at any time fall off to *Idolatry* and into *Errors* and *Practices* directly contrary to the *Christian Doctrine* revealed in the *H. Scriptures*, is on all hands, I think, denied: But that any *Particular Church* may fall into such *Errors* and *Practices* is, I think, as universally granted: Only in this Case they demanded to have the *Roman Catholick Church* excepted: And why I pray? Because though the *Roman Church* is a *Particular Church*, it is also the *Universal Church*; If this can be, and good sense can be made of a *Particular Universal Church*, then the *Roman Church* may demand this high Privilege of being exempted from the Fate of all other Churches; but if the *Roman Catholick*, that is a *Particular-Universal Church* be a gross and palpable *Contradiction*, then it is plain that the *Church of Rome* hath no more pretence to this *Privilege*, than any other *Particular Church* whatsoever.

And which is yet more, some men talk of these matters, at that rate, as if a man who thought himself obliged to quit the Communion of the *Church of Rome*, should happen to be in those Circumstances that he had no Opportunity of joining himself to any other Communion, he ought in that Case to give over all thoughts of Religion, and not to be so conceited and presumptuous as to think of going to Heaven alone by himself:

It is without doubt a very great Sin to despise the Communion of the Church, or to break off from it so long as we can continue in it without Sin: But if things should once come to that *Pass* that we must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to Him, we ought most certainly to obey God whatever comes of it; and to profess his Truth, whether any body else will join with us in that Profession or not.

And they who speak otherwise condemn the whole *Reformation*, and do in effect say that *Martin Luther* had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the *Church of Rome*, if no body else would have joined with him in that honest Design. And yet if it had been so, I hope God would have given him the Grace and Courage to have stood alone in so good and glorious a *Cause*, and to have laid down his Life for it.

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And

And for any man to be of another Opinion, is just as if a man upon great deliberation should chuse rather to be drowned, than to be saved either by a *Plank* or a *small Boat*; or to be carried into the Harbour any other way, than in a *Great Ship* of so many *hundred Tuns*.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God and to profess his Truth, though all the World should happen to do otherwise. *Christ* hath promised to preserve his Church *to the end of the World*, that is, he hath engaged his Word that he will take care that there shall always be in some part of the World or other, some persons that shall make a sincere Profession of his true Religion.

But He hath no where promised to preserve any *one Part* of his Church from such *Errors* and *Corruptions* as may oblige all good men to quit the Communion of *that Part*; yea though when they have done so, they may not know whither to resort for actual Communion with any other *sound Part* of the *Christian Church*. As it happened to some particular Persons, during the Reign and Rage of *Popery* in these *Western Parts* of the *Christian Church*.

The Result from all this *Discourse* is, to confirm and establish us all, in this *Hour of Temptation* and of the *Powers of Darkness*, in the well-grounded Belief of the necessity and justice of our *Reformation* from the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Roman Church*. And to engage us *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*: And not only to profess and promise as *Peter* did to our Lord, *though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*: But if there should be Occasion, to perform and make good this promise with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of Life it self. And whatever Trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious Resolution of *Joshua* here in the Text, that whatever others do, *W E will serve the Lord*.

chap. i. I will conclude my *Discourse*, upon this *First Particular* in the Text, with
v. 27. the *Exhortation* of St. Paul to the *Philippians*: *Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. Stand fast in One Spirit, be of one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel. In nothing terrified by your Adversaries, which to them is an evident token of Perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.*

And thus much may suffice to have spoken to the *First thing* in the Text, namely, the pious Resolution of *Joshua*, that if there were Occasion and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuse you this Day whom ye will serve, but as for M E, I will serve the Lord.*

I should now have proceeded to the *Second thing*, and which indeed I chiefly intended to speak to from this Text, namely, the pious Care of a good Father and Master of a Family, to train up those under his Charge in the Religion and Worship of the true God: *As for Me and MY H O U S E, we will serve the Lord.* But this I shall not now enter upon, but defer it to some other Opportunity. Consider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

S E R M O N L.

Concerning

FAMILY-RELIGION.

Preached at
St. Lawrence-Jewry, July the 13th. 1684.

J O S H. XXIV. 15.

--But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

I Shall now proceed to the *Second Point* contained in the *Text*, namely,

II. The *pious Care* of a good *Master* and *Father* of a *Family*, to train up those under his Charge in the *Worship* and *Service* of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

And this is the more necessary to be spoken to, because it is a great and very essential part of Religion, but strangely overlook'd and neglected in this loose and degenerate Age in which we live. It is a great part of Religion; for next to our *Personal Homage* and *Service* to *Almighty God*, and the Care of our own Souls, it is incumbent upon us to make those, who are under our Charge and subject to our Authority, God's Subjects, and his Children and Servants; which is a much more honourable and happy Relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our *Children* are a *natural* part of our selves, and the rest of our Family are a *Civil* and *Political* part: And not only we our selves, but all that we have and that belongs to us is God's and ought to be devoted to his service. And they that have the true Fear of God themselves, will be careful to teach it to others; to those especially who are under their more immediate Care and Instruction. And therefore God had so great a confidence concerning *Abraham* as to this particular as to undertake for him, that being so very good a Man himself he would not fail in so great and necessary a part of his Duty, *For I know him*, says God of him, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.* God passeth his Word for him, that he would not only take care to instruct his *Children* and the rest of his numerous *Family* in the true Religion, but that he would likewise lay a strict Charge upon them to propagate and transmit it to their Posterity.

And this certainly is the Duty of all *Fathers* and *Masters* of *Families*; and an essential part of Religion, next to serving God in our own Persons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the same. For every Man must not only give an account of himself to God, but of those likewise that are committed to his Charge that they do not miscarry through his neglect.

In speaking of this great and necessary Duty I shall do these *four* things.
First, I shall shew wherein it doth consist.

Secondly, I shall consider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Interest*.

Thirdly, I shall enquire into the *Causes* of the so common and shameful neglect of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great Decay of *Piety* amongst us.

Fourthly, As a *Motive* and *Argument* to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this *Duty*, I shall represent to you the pernicious *Consequences* of the neglect of it, both with regard to our *Selves* and to *the Publick*. In all which I shall be very brief, because things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I shall shew wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth consist. And in this I am sure there is no need to be long, because this *Duty* is much better known than practised. The principal *Parts* of it are these following.

First, By setting up the constant Worship of God in our Families. By *daily Prayers* to God, every *Morning* and *Evening*; and by reading some Portion of the *H. Scriptures* at those Times, especially out of the *Psalms* of *David*, and the *New Testament*. And this is so necessary to keep alive and to maintain a sense of God and Religion in the Minds of Men, that where it is neglected I do not see how any Family can in reason be esteemed a Family of *Christians*, or indeed, to have any Religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent *Helps* to this purpose for those that stand in need of them, as I think most Families do for the due and decent discharge of this solemn *Duty* of *Prayer*: I say, there are excellent *Helps* to this purpose, in the several *Books* of *Devotion* calculated for the private use of Families, as well as for *Secret Prayers* in our *Closets*.

So that besides the reading of the *H. Scriptures*, which are the great Fountains of *Divine Truth*; we may do well likewise to add to these other pious and profitable *Books*, which by their plainness are fitted for the instruction of all Capacities in the most necessary Points of *Belief* and *Practice*: Of which sort, God be thanked, there is an abundant store; but none that I think is more fitted for general and constant use than that excellent *Book* so well known by the *Title* of *The whole Duty of Man*; because it is conveniently divided into *Parts* or *Sections*; one of which may be read in the Family at any time when there is leisure for it; but more especially on the *Lord's Day*, when the whole Family may the more easily be brought and kept together, and have the Opportunity to attend upon these things without distraction.

And, which I must by no means omit, because it is in many Families already gone, and in others going out of Fashion: I mean a solemn acknowledgment of the Providence of God, by begging his Blessing at our *Meals*, upon his good Creatures provided for our use; and by returning *Thanks* to him for the benefit and refreshment of them: This being a piece of *Natural Religion* owned and practised in all Ages, and in most places of the World; but never so shamefully and scandalously neglected, and I fear by many slighted and despised, as it is amongst us at this Day: And most neglected where there is greatest Reason for the doing of it, I mean, at the most plentiful *Tables*, and among those of highest Quality: As if Great Persons were ashamed, or thought scorn to own from whence these Blessings come; like the Nation of the *Jews*, of whom God complains in the Prophet, *She knew not that I gave Her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiply'd her Silver and Gold; She knew not*, that is, She would not acknowledge from whose *Bounty* all these Blessings came: Or, as if the poor were

were obliged to thank God for a little, but those who are *fed to the full* and whose *Cups overflow*, so that they are almost every day surfeited of plenty, were not at least equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the *Great Giver* of all good things; and to implore *His* Bounty and Blessing, upon whom *the eyes of all do wait*, that *He may give them their meat in due season*.

O crooked and perverse Generation! Do you thus reason? Do ye thus requite the Lord, foolish and unwise? This is a very sad and broad Sign of the prevalency of *Atheism* and *Infidelity* among us, when so *Natural* and so *Reasonable* a piece of Religion, so meet and equal an acknowledgment of the constant and daily Care and Providence of Almighty God towards us begins to grow out of Date and Use, in a Nation professing Religion, and the Belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his Blessings from us, when we deny Him this just and easie Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving? *Shall not God visit for this horrible Ingratitude: And shall not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Hear, O Heavens, and be ye horribly astonished at this! I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meanest of God's Ministers, in a matter wherein the Honour of God is so nearly concern'd, to reprove, even in the Highest and Greatest of the Sons of Men, so shameful and heinous a Fault, with a proportionable Vehemence and Severity.

Secondly, Another, and that also a very considerable Part of this Duty, consists in instructing those committed to our Charge in the *Fundamental Principles*, and in the careful *Practice* of the necessary Duties of Religion; instilling these into *Children* in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*, *here a little and there a little*; and into those that are more grown up, by proper and suitable means of instruction, and by furnishing them with such *Books* as are most proper to teach them those things in Religion which are most necessary by all to be believ'd and practis'd.

And in order hereunto we should take care that those under our Charge, our *Children* and *Servants*, should be taught to read, because this will make the business of Instruction much easier; so that if they are diligent and well-dispos'd, they may, after having been taught the *first Principles* of Religion, by reading the *H. Scriptures* and other good *Books*, greatly improve themselves, so as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their Ministers.

And in this work of *Instruction* our great care should be to plant those *Principles* of Religion in our *Children* and *Servants* which are most fundamental and necessary, and are like to have the greatest and most lasting influence upon their whole Lives: As right and worthy Apprehensions of God, especially of his infinite Goodness, and that *He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*: And a lively sense also of the great evil and danger of Sin: A firm belief of the Immortality of our Souls, and of the unspeakable and endless Rewards and Punishments of another World. If these *Principles* once take root, they will spread strangely, and probably stick by them and continue with them all their Days.

Whereas, if we plant in them *doubtful Doctrines* and *Opinions*, and inculcate upon them the *Notions* of a *Sect*, and the *Jargon* of a *Party*, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we must expect that our *Harvest* will be answerable to our *Husbandry*: *We have sown the Wind, and shall reap the Whirlwind*. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more particularly and fully in the ensuing *Sermons* concerning the good Education of Children.

And

And this work of *Instruction* of those that are under our Charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other Times, so it is more peculiarly seasonable on the *Lord's Day*, which ought to be employed by us to Religious Purposes, and in the Exercises of Piety and Devotion: Chiefly in the *Publick Worship* and *Service* of God, upon which we should take care that our *Children* and *Servants* should diligently and devoutly attend. Because there God affords the *Means* which he hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Piety and Goodness, and to which he hath promised a more especial Blessing: There they will have the opportunity of joining in the *publick Prayers* of God's Church, and of sharing in the unspeakable benefit and advantage of them: And there they will also have the advantage of being instructed by the Ministers of God in the Doctrine of Salvation, and the way to Eternal Life; and of being powerfully incited to the practice of Piety and Vertue.

There likewise they will be invited to the *Lord's Table*, to participate of the *H. Sacrament* of Christ's most blessed Body and Blood, ; which being the most Solemn Institution of the Christian Religion, the frequent participation whereof, is by our *B. Lord*, in remembrance of his *Dying-Love*, enjoined upon all *Christians*, we ought to take a very particular care, that those who are under our Charge, so soon as they are capable of it, be duly instructed and prepared for it; that so, as often as Opportunity is offer'd for it, they may be present at this Holy Action, and partake of the inestimable Benefits and Comforts of it.

And when the *Publick Worship* of that Day is over, our Families should be instructed at *Home*, by having the *Scriptures* and other good *Books* read to them; and care likewise should be taken that they do this themselves; this being the chief Opportunity that most of them, especially those that are *Servants*, have of minding the business of Religion, and thinking seriously of another World.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great consequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of Religion in the World, that this Day be Religiously observed, and spent as much as may be in the exercises of Piety, and in the care of our Souls. For surely every one that hath a true sense of Religion will grant, that it is necessary that some Time should be solemnly set apart for this purpose, which is of all other our greatest Concernment: And they who neglect this so proper Season and Opportunity, will hardly find any other Time for it: Especially those who are under the Government and Command of others, as *Children* and *Servants*, who are seldom upon any other Day allowed to be so much Masters of their Time, as upon this Day.

Thirdly, I add further, as a considerable Part of the Duty of Parents and Masters of Families, if they be desirous to have their *Children* and *Servants* Religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to Heaven, that they do not only allow them Time and Opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every Day; but more especially on the *Lord's Day*, Morning and Evening, to pray to God for the Forgiveness of their Sins, and for his Mercy and Blessings upon them; and likewise to Praise Him for all his Favours and Benefits conferr'd upon them from Day to Day.

And in order to this, they ought to take care that their *Children* and *Servants* be furnish'd with such short *Forms* of Prayer and Praise, as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because there

there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these *Duties*, especially at first, without some *Helps* of this kind.

Fourthly and *lastly*, another principal *Part* of this *Duty* consists in giving good *Example* to our *Families*. This was *David's* Resolution, *Psal.* 101. 2. *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my House with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be *exemplary* to thy Family in the best things; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober and prudent and unblameable Conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our Care and Authority good, is to be good our Selves, and by our good Example to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best Instructions will signify but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best Instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own Example, and Practice. The want of this will weaken the Authority of all our good Counsel, and very little Reverence and Obedience will be paid to it. The Precepts and Admonitions of a very good Man have in them a great power of Persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and to inflame others to *go and do likewise*: But the good Instructions of a bad Man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that Counsel which they see he that gives it does not think fit to take himself. But of this likewise I shall have Occasion to speak more fully in the following *Discourses* concerning the good Education of Children. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the *First* thing which I proposed, namely, wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth consist. I proceed to the *Second*, namely;

II. To consider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Interest*.

First, In Point of *Duty*. All Authority over others is a *Talent* intrusted with us by God for the benefit and good of others; and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make use of it to that end. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the *temporal* welfare of our Family, to feed and cloath their *Bodies* and to give them a comfortable Subsistence here in the World: And surely much more are we obliged to take care of their *Souls*, and to consult their *eternal* Happiness in another Life; in comparison of which all *temporal* Concernments and Considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a *Father* or *Master* to suffer a *Child* to starve for want of the *necessaries* of Life, food and raiment, and all the World would cry shame upon them for it: But how much greater Cruelty must it in reason be thought to let an *immortal* Soul, and one for whom *Christ* died, perish for want of knowledge and necessary Instruction for the attaining of *eternal* Salvation?

The *Apostle* St. Paul thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the *temporal* welfare of their Families, *He that provideth not*, saith he, *for his own*, especially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an *Infidel*, that is, he does not deserve the Name of a *Christian*, who neglects a Duty to which from the plain Dictates of Nature a *Heathen* thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to provide for the everlasting Happiness, and to prevent the eternal Misery and Ruin of those who are so immediately under their Charge, and so very nearly related to them?

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We are obliged to procure the Happiness of our *Children* not only by the *Laws of Christianity*, but likewise by all the *Natural* bonds of *Duty* and *Affection*. For our *Children* are a part of our Selves, and if they perish by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual Wound and Sting to us; their Blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lie at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewise in Justice, and by way of Reparation, to take all possible care of their Happiness; for we have conveyed a sad inheritance to them, in those corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us: And therefore we should with the greatest care and diligence endeavour to rectify their perverse Natures, and to curse those cursed dispositions to evil which we have transmitted to them: And since God hath been pleased in so much mercy to provide, by the abundant *Grace* of the *Gospel*, so powerful a *Remedy* for this *hereditary Disease* of our corrupt and degenerate Nature, we should do what in us lies, that they may partake of the Blessing and Benefit of it.

And as to other Members of our Family, whether they be *Servants*, or other *Relations* of whom we have taken the Charge; common *Humanity* will oblige us to be concerned for their Happiness as they are *Men* and of the same Nature with our Selves; and *Charity* likewise, as they are *Christians* and *Baptized* into the same *Faith* and capable of the same *common Salvation*, does yet more strictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; especially since they are committed to our Care, and for that reason we must expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our *Obligation* in point of *Duty* is very clear and strong, and if we be remiss and negligent in the discharge of it we can never answer it either to God, or to our own Consciences: Which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it to the serious consideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conscientious performance of it.

Secondly, We are hereto likewise *obliged* in point of *Interest*; because it is really for our service and advantage that those that belong to us should serve and fear God: Religion being the best and surest Foundation of the *Duties* of all *Relations*, and the best Caution and Security for the true discharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient *Children*, diligent and faithful *Servants*? Nothing will so effectually oblige them to be so, as the Fear of God and the Principles of Religion firmly settled and rooted in them. *Abraham* who by the Testimony of God himself was so eminent an Example in this kind, both of a good *Father* and a good *Master* of his Family, found the good success of his Religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his Son *Isaac*, and his chief *Servant* and *Steward* of his House, *Eliezer of Damascus*.

What an unexampled Instance of the most profound respect and obedience to the Commands of his Father did *Isaac* give, when without the least murmuring of reluctance he submitted to be bound and laid upon the Altar, and to have been slain for a Sacrifice; if God had not by an Angel, sent on purpose, interposed to prevent it?

What an admirable *Servant* to *Abraham* was the *Steward* of his House, *Eliezer of Damascus*? How diligent and faithful was he in his *Master's* service? So that he trusted him in his greatest Concernments and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great Affair of the Marriage of his Son *Isaac*, what pains did he take, what prudence did he use,
what

what fidelity did he shew in the discharge of that great Trust, giving himself no rest till he had accomplish'd the Business he was sent about? God seems purposely to have left these two *Instances* upon Record in *Scripture*, to encourage *Fathers* and *Masters* of Families to a Religious care of their *Children* and *Servants*.

And to shew the power of Religion to oblige Men to their Duty, I will add but one Instance more. How did the fear of God secure *Joseph's* fidelity to his *Master*, in the Case of a very great and violent Temptation? When there was nothing else to restrain him from so lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was so powerfully tempted, the consideration of the great trust his Master reposed in him, and the sense of his Duty to him, but above all, the *Fear of God* preserv'd him from consenting to so vile and wicked an action, *How can I*, says he, *do this great wickedness and sin against God?*

So that in prudence, and from a wise consideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound to us, we ought with the greatest care to instill the Principles of Religion into those that belong to us. For if the Seeds of true Piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it: And if this be neglected, we shall certainly find the mischief and inconvenience of it. If our *Children* and *Servants* be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they should reverence and regard us? at least we can have no sure hold of them. For nothing but Religion lays an obligation upon Conscience, nor is there any other certain bond of Duty, and Obedience, and Fidelity: Men will break loose from all other Ties, when a fit Occasion and a fair Opportunity doth strongly tempt them. And as Religion is necessary to procure the favour of God and all the comfort and happiness which that brings along with it, so it is necessary likewise to secure the mutual Duties and Offices of Men to one another. I proceed to the *Third* thing which I propos'd, namely,

III. To enquire into the *Causes* of the so common and shameful Neglect of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great decay of Piety among us. And this may in part be ascribed to our Civil Confusions and Distractions, but chiefly to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, which have not only divided and scattered our *Parochial* Churches and *Congregations*, but have entred likewise into our *Families*, and made great disturbances and disorders there.

First, This may in good part be ascribed to our Civil Confusions and Distractions, which for the time do lay all *Laws* asleep, and do not only occasion a general Licentiousness and Dissoluteness of Manners, but have usually a proportionable bad influence upon the Order and Government of *Families*; by weakning the Authority of those that Govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater Licence to those that should be *governed*: For when *publick Laws* lose their Authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the strict *Rules* and *Order* of *Families*, which after great and long Disorder are very hard to be retriev'd and recover'd.

Secondly, This great Neglect and Decay of Religious Order in Families is chiefly owing to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, upon occasion whereof many under the pretence of Conscience have broke loose into a boundless Liberty. So that among the manifold ill Consequences of our *Divisions* in Religion this is none of the least, that the Religious Order of Families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some will not meet at the same *Prayer* in the *Family*, nor go to the same *Church* and

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Place of *publick Worship*; and upon that pretence take the liberty to do what they please, and under colour of serving God in a different way according to their Consciences, do either wholly or in a great measure neglect the *Worship of God*; nay, it is well if they do not at that *Time* haunt and frequent Places of Debauchery and Lewdness; which they may safely do, being from under the eye of their *Parents* and *Masters*: However, by this means it becomes impossible for the most careful *Masters of Families*, to take an account of those under their Charge how they spend their time on the *Lord's Day*, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of Religion.

And this methinks is so great and sensible an inconvenience, and hath had such dismal effects in many Families, as ought effectually to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater Union in matters of Religion; and to put us in mind of those happy Days when God was serv'd in one way and whole *Families went to the House of God in Companies*; and *Fathers* and *Masters* had their *Children* and *Servants* continually under their eye, and they were all united in their *Worship* and *Devotion*, both in their own Houses and in the *House of God*; and by this means the *Work of Religious Education* and *Instruction* was effectually carried on, and a steady *Authority* and *decent Order* was maintained in Families; Men were edify'd and built up in Religion, and *God in all things was glorify'd*.

And we may assure our selves, that till we are better agreed in matters of Religion, and our unhappy and childish Differences are laid aside; and till the *Publick* and unanimous *Worship of God* do in some measure recover its reputation, the good *Order* and *Government of Families* as to the great ends of Religion is never likely to obtain and to have any considerable effect. Which I hope will make all Men who heartily love God and Religion, to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these Differences; that in our private Families, as well as in the publick Assemblies of the Church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

^{1 Cor. I. 10.} I beseech you therefore, Brethren, as St. Paul exhorts the *Corinthians*, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment; that is, so far as is necessary to the keeping of the *Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, and to prevent *Divisions* and *Separations* among *Christians*. I proceed to the *Fourth* and last thing I propos'd, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,

IV. The very mischievous and fatal *Consequences* of the neglect of this *Duty*, both to the *Publick*, and to our *Selves*.

First, To the Publick. Families are the first *Seminaries* of Religion, and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for publick teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our *Children* and *Servants* at home to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at Church, is like an error in the first Concoction which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that in this first neglect the foundation of an Infinite Mischief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of Religion, how can it reasonably be expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the Fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all Relations; undutiful

tiful Children, slothful and unfaithful Servants, scandalous Members of the Church, unprofitable to the Common-wealth, disobedient to Governours both Ecclesiastical and Civil; and in a word, Burthens of the Earth, and so many Plagues of Human Society: And this Evil, if no Remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread it self farther in every Age, till Impiety and Wickedness, Infidelity and Profaneness have over-run all, and the World be ripe for its final Ruin: Just as it was before the Destruction of the Old World, when *the wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth, and all Flesh had corrupted their way, then the Flood came and swept them all away.*

Secondly, The *Consequences* of this Neglect will likewise be very dismal to our selves. We shall first of all others feel the *Inconvenience*, as we had the greatest share in the *Guilt* of it. We can have no manner of security of the Duty and Fidelity of those of our Family to us, if they have no sense of Religion, no fear of God before their Eyes. If we have taken no care to instruct them in their Duty to God, it is no wise probable that they will make Conscience of their Duty to us.

So that we shall have the first ill *Consequences* of their Miscarriage; besides the *Shame* and *Sorrow* of it: And not only so, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great measure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our score in the Judgment of the Great Day. It ought to make us tremble to think with what Bitterness and Rage our Children and Servants will then fly in our Faces, for having been the Cause of their eternal Ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In that Day, next to God and our own Consciences, our most terrible Accusers will be those of our own House, nay, those that came out of our own Bowels, and were not only Part of our Family, but even of our Selves. But this also I shall have a proper Occasion to prosecute more fully in the following Discourses concerning the *Education of Children*, to which I refer it.

Upon all these Considerations and many more that might be urged upon us, we should take up the pious Resolution of Joshua here in the Text, that *We and OUR HOUSES will serve the Lord*: And that, through God's Grace, we will do all that in us lies by our future Care and Diligence to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I shall only add this one Consideration more to all that I have already mentioned: If Children were carefully educated, and Families Regularly and Religiously ordered, what a happy and delightful Place, what a Paradise would this World be, in comparison of what now it is?

I beseech you therefore, Brethren, that these things which I have with so much plainness and faithfulness laid before you, may sink into your hearts, before it be too late, and whilst the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect and repent of it, when the thing will be past Remedy and there will be no place for Repentance. But I hope better things of you, Brethren, and things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.

S E R M O N L I.

O F T H E

E D U C A T I O N of *C H I L D R E N*.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I Have on purpose chosen this *Text* for the subject of a Preparatory Discourse in order to the reviving of that so shamefully neglected and yet most useful and necessary Duty of *Catechizing* children and young persons: But I shall extend it to the consideration of the *Education* of *Children* in general, as a matter of the greatest consequence both to Religion and the Publick welfare.

For we who are the Ministers of God ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common Duties of Christianity, such as belong to all Christians, but likewise in all the particular Duties which the several Relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these I know none that is of greater concernment to Religion and to the good Order of the World than the careful Education of Children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent and diligent and constant application of our best care and endeavour.

It is a known Saying of *Melancthon* that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*; to bear and bring forth Children, to instruct and bring them up to be Men, and to govern them when they arrive at Man's estate. The instruction and good Education of Children is none of the least difficult of these. For to do it to the best advantage does not only require great sagacity to discern their particular disposition and temper, but great discretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewise continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to Religion and Vertue:

It requires great wisdom and industry to advance a considerable Estate, much art and contrivance and pains to raise a great and regular Building: But the greatest and noblest Work in the World, and an effect of the greatest prudence and care is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and fashion him to Piety, and Justice, and Temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now the Foundations of this great Work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of Children, that it may rise and grow up with them;

them; according to the advice of the *Wifeman* here in the *Text*, *Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained these *two* things.

First, The Duty of Parents and Instructors of Children, *Train up a Child*, &c. By *Childhood* here I understand the Age of Persons from their Birth, but more especially from their first capacity of Instruction till they arrive at the State and Age which next succeeds *Childhood*, and which we call *Youth*; and which is the proper Season for *Confirmation*. For when Children have been well *Catechized* and instructed in Religion, then is the fittest Time for them to take upon themselves and in their own Persons to confirm that *solemn Vow* which by their *Sureties* they made at their *Baptism*.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, that is, in the course of Life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to God and Men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his Life.

Secondly, Here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good Education: *And when he is old he will not depart from it.* This we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: Not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good Education of a Child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent Education. *Solomon* means that from the very nature of the thing this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a Child to be a good Man. For as *Aristotle* truly observes, *Moral Sayings* and *Proverbial Speeches* are to be understood only *ἑπὶ τὸ πᾶν*, that is, to be usually and for the most part true. And though there may be several *exceptions* made and *instances* given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this *Aphorism* or *Proverb* of *Solomon* in the *Text*; and so likewise are most of the *wise Sayings* of this *Book of the Proverbs*, as also of *Ecclesiastes*: And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall upon due consideration find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the *Text* may be fully comprised in the following *Proposition*.

That the careful, and prudent, and religious Education of Children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.

In the handling of this Argument I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my Discourse to these *Five Heads*.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it.

II. I shall give some more particular Directions for the management of this work in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

III. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this Duty.

IV. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this *Proposition*, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole Lives.

V. And lastly; I shall by the most powerful Arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and perswade those whose Duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall

I. I shall shew more generally *wherein the good Education of Children doth consist*, and severally consider *the principal Parts* of it. And under this *Head* I shall comprehend promiscuously the Duty of *Parents*, and, in case of their death, of *Guardians*; and of *God-fathers* and *God-mothers*; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the Children for whom they are *Sureties* are seldom under their power: And the Duty likewise of those who are the *Teachers* and *Instructors* of them: And the Duty also of *Masters of Families* towards *Servants* in their childhood and younger years, And lastly, the Duty of *Ministers*, under whose *Parochial* care and inspection Children are as members of the Families committed to their charge: I say, under this *Head* I shall comprehend the Duties of all these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these *eight* particulars, as the principal parts wherein the Education of Children doth consist.

First, In the tender and careful nursing of them.

Secondly, In bringing them to be baptized and admitted Members of *Christ's Church*, at the times appointed or accustomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members.

Thirdly, In a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their Duty to *God* and to their *Neighbour*.

Fourthly, And more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Vertue.

Fifthly, In giving them good Example.

Sixthly, In wise restraints from that which is Evil, by seasonable Reproof and Correction.

Seventhly, In bringing them to be publicly Catechized by the Minister in order to Confirmation.

Eighthly, In bringing them to the Bishop to be solemnly Confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the Vow which by their Sureties they enter'd into at their Baptism.

I. *In the tender and careful nursing of Children.* I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural Duty incumbent upon Parents towards their Children: And this is particularly the Duty of Mothers. This affection and tenderness, Nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living Creatures towards their young ones: And there cannot be a greater reproach to Creatures that are endued with Reason, than to neglect a Duty to which Nature directs even the Brute Creatures by a blind and unthinking Instinct. So that it is such a Duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to Nature, and from which nothing can excuse but *disability*, or *sickness*, or the *evident danger* of the *Mother*, or the *interposition* of the *Father's Authority*, or some very extraordinary and publick necessity.

This I foresee will seem a very *hard Saying* to nice and delicate Mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own Bodies: But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think my self obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them that this is a natural Duty; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any *positive Precept* of *reveal'd Religion*; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying Sins of this Age
and

and Nation; and which as much as any Sin whatsoever is evidently a punishment to it self in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it: Which I shall; as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent; that if it be possible, we may in this first Point of Education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of Parents and Children, and consequently to the Public Good of Humane Society, be brought to comply with the unerring Instinct of Nature, and with the plain Dictate of the common Reason of Mankind, and the general practice of all Ages and Nations.

First, The neglect of this Duty is a sort of exposing of Children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the consequence of it is but little better than the laying a Child in the Streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a Parish. There are *two* very visible inconveniences which do commonly attend it.

1st, Strange Milk, which is often very disagreeable to the Child, and with which the Child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the Nurse, together with a great deal of her natural Inclinations and Irregular Passions, which many times stick by the Child for a long time after: And which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret Disease of the Nurse is conveyed to the Child.

2dly, A shameful and dangerous neglect of the Child, especially by such Nurses as make a Trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great City: Who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the Child, by the excessive, not to say extravagant *vails*, which usually here in *England*, above all other places in the World, are given at *Christenings*: And then by the strait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the Child; are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the Child; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, sets the Nurse at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another Child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected than that a Nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own Child, should have no great care and tenderness for a Child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad Observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that in several of the *Towns* and *Villages* about *London*, where this Trade of nursing Children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these Children lives out the year: And this surely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige Parents to take all possible care to prevent.

Secondly, This course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakning of natural affection on both sides; I mean both on the part of the Mother and of the Child. The pains of nursing as well as of bearing Children doth insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the Mother. *Can a woman, says God, forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can a Woman?* that is, a Mother, not a Nurse; for the sucking child is said to be the son of her womb. God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible. Isa. 49. 15.

And this likewise is a great endearment of the Mother to the Child: Which endearment, when the Child is put out, is transferr'd from the Mother to the Nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the Nurse were the true Mother, and the true Mother a meer stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weaken'd; which is great pity, because when it

is kept up in its full strength it often proves one of the best securities of the Duty of a Child.

But because this severe Doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I must take the more care to guard it against the *Objections* which will be made to it. Those from *natural disability*, or *sickness*; from *evident* and *apparent danger* of the *Mother*, or from the *interposition* of the *Father's Authority*, or from *plain necessity*; or if there be any other that have an equal Reason with these, I have prevented already by allowing them to be just and reasonable *exceptions* from the general *Rule*, when they are real, and not made *Pretences* to shake off our *Duty*.

But there are besides these, *two* *Objections* which indeed are real, but yet seem to have too great a weight with those who would fain decline this *Duty*, and are by no means sufficient to excuse Mothers, no not those of the highest Rank and Quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are these: The *manifest trouble*, and the *manifold restraints* which the careful discharge of this *Duty* does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

1st. For the *trouble* of it, I have only this to say, and I think that no more need to be said about it; that no body is discharged from any *Duty* by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it; since God who made it a *Duty* foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

2^{dly}. As to the *manifold restraints* which it lays upon Mothers; this will best be answer'd by considering of what nature these *restraints* are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This *Duty* restrains Mothers from spending their Morning and their Money in curious and costly Dressing; from mis-spending the rest of the Day in formal and for the most part impertinent Visits, and in seeing and hearing Plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen or heard by modest Persons and those who pretend to Religion and Vertue; as I hope all Christians do, especially Persons of higher Rank and Quality: and it restrains them likewise from trifling away a great part of the Night in Gaming, and in Revelling till past Midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible *restraints* which this natural *Duty*, of Mothers nursing their Childten, lays upon them. Now I cannot but think all these to be very happy *restraints*: Happy surely for the *Child*; and in many respects happy for the *Father*, and for the whole *Family*, which by this means will be kept in much better order: But happiest of all for the *Mother*, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary *Duty*, but is hereby also hinder'd from running into many great Faults, which before they will be forgiven must cost her a deep Contrition, and a very bitter Repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unusual Argument, than will please the present Age: But I hope Posterity will be so wise as to consider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the World will never be much better till this great Fault be mended. I proceed to the next *Particular* wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, namely,

II. In bringing them to be Baptized and admitted Members of Christ's Church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members. I mean, to bring them to the Church to be there publicly initiated, and solemnly admitted by Baptism. And this the Rules of the Church of England do strictly enjoyn, unless the Child be

be in danger of death; and in that case only it is allowed to administer Baptism privately, and in a summary way without performing the whole Office: But then if the Child live, it is ordered that it shall be brought to the Church, where the remainder of the Office is to be solemnly perform'd.

I know that of late years, since our unhappy *Confusions*, this *Sacrament* hath very frequently been administred in private: And *Ministers* have been in a manner, and to avoid the great mischief of *Separation*, necessitated to comply with the Obstinacy of the greater and more powerful of their *Parishioners*; who for their ease, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous *Christening*, will either have their Children baptized at home by their *Minister*, or if he refuse, will get some other *Minister* to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat such persons calmly to consider how contrary to Reason, and to the plain design of the Institution of this *Sacrament*, this perverse custom, and their obstinate resolution in it, is. For is there any *Civil Society* or *Corporation* into which persons are admitted without some kind of *Solemnity*? and is the *Privilege* of being admitted *Members* of the *Christian Church*, and *Heirs* of the great and glorious *Promises* and *Blessings* of the *New Covenant* of the *Gospel* less considerable and fit to be conferr'd with less *Solemnity*? I speak to *Christians*, and they who are so in good earnest, will without my using more words about it, consider what I say in this Particular.

III. Another and very necessary Part of the good Education of Children is, by degrees to inform and carefully to instruct them in the whole compass of their Duty to God, their Neighbour, and Themselves: That so they may be taught how to behave themselves in all the steps of their Life, from their first capacity of Reason till they arrive at the more perfect use and exercise of that Faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This Duty God does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar People, the People of *Israel*, speaking of the *Law* which he had given them: *Thou shalt*, says He, *teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.* And this God long before promised, that *Abraham the Father of the faithful*, would do; *I know Abraham*, says He, *that he will command his Children and his Household after him to keep the way of the Lord.* Deut. 6. 7.
Gen. 18. 19.

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of Reason and Understanding in Children. So the Prophet directs; *Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast: For precept must be upon precept, &c.* Isa. 28. 9, 10.

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themselves. And in the first place we must inform them, that there is such a *Being as God*, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things. And then, that we are all his *Creatures*, and the work of his hands, that it is *He that hath made us, and not we our selves*: That He continually preserves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of Him by Prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependance upon Him; and to return *thanks* to Him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easie Tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their Duty to God and Men, as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because *Fear* and *Hope* are the two *Passions* which do chiefly sway and govern Human Nature, and the main Springs and Principles of action; therefore Children are to be carefully inform'd that there is a Life after Death, wherein Men shall receive from God a mighty and eternal Reward, or a terrible and endless Punishment, according as they have done or neglected their Duty in this Life: That God will love and reward those who do his Will and keep his Commandments, but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of Iniquity and the wilful transgressors of his Laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of Humane Nature, deriv'd to us by the *Fall* and wilful transgression of our *first Parents*; and of the way of our *Recovery* out of this miserable state by *Jesus Christ*; whom God hath sent in our Nature to purchase and accomplish the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind, from the Captivity of Sin and *Satan*, and from the Damnation of Hell.

IV. The good Education of Children consists not only in informing their Minds in the knowledge of God and their Duty, but more especially in endeavouring with the greatest care and prudence to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following Graces and Virtues.

First, To Obedience and Modesty; to Diligence and Sincerity: and to Tenderness and Pity, as the general dispositions to Religion and Virtue.

Secondly, To the good government of their Passions, and of their Tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate Lying as a base and vile quality; these being as it were the foundations of Religion and Virtue.

Thirdly, To Piety and Devotion towards God, to Sobriety and Chastity with regard to themselves; and to Justice and Charity towards all Men; as the principal and essential Parts of Religion and Virtue.

First, As the general dispositions to Religion and Virtue, we must train them up.

1st. To Obedience. Parents must take great care to maintain their Authority over their Children; otherwise they will neither regard their Commands, nor hearken to and follow their Instructions. If they once get head and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2dly, To Modesty which is a fear of Shame and Disgrace. This disposition, which is proper to Children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. They are modest, says Aristotle, who are afraid to offend, and they are afraid to offend who are most apt to do it; as Children are, because they are much under the power of their Passions, without a proportionable strength of Reason to govern them and keep them under.

Now Modesty is not properly a Virtue, but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly Disposition, and a great preservative and security against Sin and Vice: And those Children, who are much under the restraint of Modesty, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good: Whereas Immodesty is a vicious temper broke loose and got free from all restraint: So that there is nothing left to keep an impudent person from Sin, when fear of Shame is gone: For Sin will soon take possession of that person whom Shame hath left. He that is once become shameless hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this Disposition in Children, as much

as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their Innocency, and to bring them to Goodness.

3dly. To *Diligence*, *sine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit, without which* says one, *there never was any great and excellent person.* When the *Roman Historians* describe an extraordinary Man, this always enters into his Character as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ, diligentia singulari*, of *incredible industry, of singular diligence*; or something to that purpose. And indeed a Person can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad without this quality. The *Devil* himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a Spirit, and did not *compass the Earth* and go to and fro seeking whom he might devour.

This is part of the Character of *Sylla*, and *Marius*, and *Cataline*, those great Disturbers of the *Roman State*; as well as of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, who were much greater and better Men, but yet gave trouble enough to their Country, and at last dissolved the *Roman Commonwealth*, by their Ambition and Contention for Superiority: This, I say, enters into all their Characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable Spirit. So that *Diligence* in it self is neither a *Vertue* nor a *Vice*, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes; and yet where all other requisites do concur it is a very proper *Instrument* and *Disposition* for *Vertue*.

Therefore train up Children to *diligence*, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. *The diligent hand, saith Solomon, maketh rich; Rich in* Prov. 10. 4. *estate, Rich in knowledge. Seest thou a man diligent in his business, as the* Prov. 22. 29. *same Wise-man observes, he shall stand before Princes, he shall not stand before* Prov. 12. 24. *mean, or obscure men. And again, the hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under Tribute. Diligence* puts almost every thing into our power, and will in time make Children capable of the best and greatest things.

Whereas *Idleness* is the bane and ruine of Children; it is the unbending of their Spirits, the *Rust* of their Faculties, and as it were the *laying* of their Minds *fallow*; not as Husbandmen do their Lands that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, because they have never been inured and accustomed to it; which makes their Spirits *restive*, and when you have occasion to quicken them and spur them up to business they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your Children be without a *Calling*, or without some useful, or at least innocent employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of necessity of being *vicious* for want of something better to do. The *Devil* tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery: But the slothful and idle, no body having hired them and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service, and having nothing to do they even tempt the *Devil* himself to tempt *them*, and to take them in his way.

4thly. To *sincerity*; which is not so properly a single Vertue, as the life and soul of all other Graces and Vertues: and without which, what shew of goodness soever a Man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in Children, as that which when they come to be Men will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and Men.

5thly. To *tendernefs* and *pity*: Which when they come to engage in business and to have dealing in the Worlds, will be a good bar against Injustice and Oppression; and will be continually prompting us to Charity, and will fetch powerful Arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preserve this goodness and tendernefs of nature, this so very humane and useful affection, keep Children, as much as is possible, out of the way of *bloody Sights* and *Spectacles* of cruelty; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of Creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport and pleasure; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

Secondly, As the main *Foundations* of Religion and Vertue, Children must be carefully train'd up to the Government of their *Passions*, and of their *Tongues*; and particularly, to *speake truth*, and to hate *lying* as a base and vile quality.

1st. To the good Government of their *Passions*. It is the disorder of these, more especially of *Desire* and *Fear*, and *Anger*, which betrays us to many evils. *Anger* prompts men to *contention* and *murther*: Inordinate *Desire*, to *covetousness* and *fraud* and *oppression*: And *Fear* many times awes men into Sin, and deters them from their Duty.

Now if these *Passions* be cherish'd, or even but let alone in Children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour and the understanding into prejudice, and wilfulness: But if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being prun'd away, they may prove excellent Instruments of Vertue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in Children any thing that looks like Rage and furious Anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing Desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratifie them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their Parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of *Fear* to neglect their Duty, or to fall into any Sin, or to be tempted by telling a Lye to commit one fault to hide and excuse another, which Children are very apt to do. The best Remedy of this Evil will be to plant a greater Fear against a less, and to tell them *what* and *whom* they should chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the Body, but Him who after he hath kill'd can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

The neglect of Children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their *Passions*, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere *Christians* when they came to be Men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their Lives have been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to Religion; when their light which should shine before men is so often darken'd and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

2dly. To

2dly. To the *government of their Tongues*. To this end teach Children *Silence*, especially in the presence of their *Betters*. And as soon as they are capable of such a Lesson, let them be taught not to speak but upon *consideration*, both of *what* they say, and before *whom*. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary Duty and Vertue of *speaking truth*, as one of the best and strongest bands of humane Society and Commerce: And possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a *Lye*: for if it be so great a provocation to *give* a man the *Lye*, then surely to be guilty of that Fault must be a mighty Reproach.

They who write of *Japan* tell us that those People, though mere *Heathens*, take such an effectual course in the Education of their Children as to render a *Lye*, and *breach of Faith* above all things odious to them: Inso-much that it is a very rare thing for any Person among them to be taken in a *Lye*, or found guilty of *breach of Faith*. And cannot the Rules of *Christianity* be render'd as effectual to restrain men from these Faults which are scandalous even to *Nature*, and much more so to the *Christian Religion*?

To the Government of the *Tongue* does likewise belong the restraining of Children from *lewd* and *obscene* words, from *vain* and *profane* talk; and especially from horrid *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: From all which they are easily kept at first, but if they are once accustomed to them it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit of these evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep *Oaths* out of their common discourse; but if they be heated and in passion, they throw out *Oaths* and *Curses* as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling stones, or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in Children to grow up into a *Habit*.

Thirdly, As the *principle* and *essential Parts* of Religion and Vertue, let Children be carefully bred up.

1st. To *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise *Purity* and *Chastity*. The governour of the *sensual Appetite* as to all kind of *Bodily* pleasures is not only a great part of Religion, but an excellent *instrument* of it, and a necessary *foundation* of *Piety* and *Justice*. For he that cannot govern *himself* is not like to discharge his Duty either to *God* or *Men*. And therefore *St. Paul* puts *Sobriety* first, as a *primary* and *principal* Vertue in which men are instructed by the *Christian Religion*, and which must be laid as the foundation both of *Piety* towards *God*, and of *Righteousness* to *Men*. The *Grace of God*, for so he calls the *Gospel*, that brings *Salvation* unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us that denying *ungodliness* and *worldly lusts* we should live *soberly*, and *righteously*, and *godly* in this present world. It first teaches us to live *soberly*; and unless we train up Children to this Vertue we must never expect that they will either live *righteously* or *godly* in this present World.

Especially, Children must be bred up to great *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in their *Diet*, which will retrench the fewel of other inordinate Appetites. It is a good *Saying* I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*, a well manner'd and well govern'd Appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great part of Vertue. I do not mean, that Children should be brought up according to the Rules of a *Lessian Diet*, which sets an equal stint to all Stomachs, and is as senseless a thing as a *Law* would be which should enjoin that *Shoes* for all Mankind should be made upon one and the same *Last*.

2dly, To

2dly, To a serious and unaffected *Piety* and *Devotion* towards God, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free, as may be, from all *tricks* of Superstition, or *freaks* of *Enthusiasm*; which, if *Parents* and *Teachers* be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the Religion of Children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wise and sober Persons, phantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish Superstitions and wild Conceits upon others, who understand Religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his publick Worship, and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it, without wandring and distraction: To *Pray* to God as the Fountain of all Grace and the *giver* of every good and perfect gift: And to acknowledge Him and to render *Thanks* to Him, as our most gracious and constant Benefactor, and the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives: To be careful to do what He commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: To be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and all-seeing Eye, which beholds us in secret: And to do every thing in Obedience to the Authority of that Great Law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy; and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial Judgment of the Great Day.

3dly, To *Justice* and *Honesty*: To defraud and oppress no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their Promises and Contracts: and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the Equity of that Great Rule, which is so natural, and so easy, that even Children are capable of it; I mean that Rule which our B. Saviour tells us is the Law and the Prophets, namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their Case and Circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are *Parents* and have to do in the World, ought to be just and equal in all your dealings. In the first place for the sake of your own Souls, and next for the sake of your Children: Not only that you may entail no Curse upon the Estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no Injustice by the Example you set before them; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing; because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because *Justice* is in truth a manly Vertue, and least understood by Children; and therefore *Injustice* is a Vice which they will soonest practise and with the least reluctance, because they have the least knowledge of it in many particular Cases: And because they have so little sense of this great Vertue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing: For if they practice it in that Case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it:

I remember that *Xenophon* in his *Institution of Cyrus*, which he designed for the *Idea* of a well educated Prince, tells us this little but very instructive Story concerning young *Cyrus*: That his Governour, the better to make him to understand the nature of *Justice*, puts this Case to him: You see there, says he to *Cyrus*, two Boys playing, of different stature; the lesser of them hath a very long Coat, and the bigger a very short one: Now, says he, if you were a Judge how would you dispose of these two Garments? *Cyrus* immediately, and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden Sentence, That the taller Boy should have the longer Garment, and he that was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was fittest for them both:

both: Upon which his Governour sharply rebukes him to this purpose; telling him, that if he were to make two Coats for them he said well; but he did not put this Case to him as a *Tailor* but as a *Judge*, and as such he had given a very wrong Sentence: For a *Judge*, says he, ought not to consider what is *most fit*, but what is *just*; not who could make the *best use* of a thing, but who hath the *most right* to it.

This I bring partly to shew in what familiar ways the principles of *Vertue* may be instill'd into Children; but chiefly to prove that *Justice* is a *manly Vertue*, and that there is nothing wherein Children may be more easily misled, than in matter of *Right* and *Wrong*: Therefore Children should be taught the general *Principles* and *Rules* of *Justice* and *Righteousness*, because if we would teach them to *do Justice* we must teach them to *know* what *Justice* is. For many are unjust merely out of Ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4thly, To *Charity*; I mean chiefly to the poor and destitute; because this, as it is an *essential* so it is a most *substantial* Part of Religion. Now to encourage this Disposition in Children we must not only give them the Example of it, but must frequently inculcate upon them such Passages of *Scripture* as these; That *pure Religion* and *undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction*: That *as we sow in this kind, so we shall reap*: That *he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy*: That at the *Judgment* of the *Great Day* we shall in a very particular manner be call'd to an account for the practice or omission of this Duty, and shall then be absolved or condemned according as we have exercised or neglected this great Vertue of the Christian Religion.

S E R M O N LII.

O F T H E

E D U C A T I O N *of* C H I L D R E N.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Pfal. 101.
2.

V. **T**HE good Education of Children consists *In giving them good Example.* This course David took in his Family, as appears by that solemn Resolution of his, *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Let Parents and Masters of Families give good Example to their Children and Servants, in a constant serving of God in their Families, which will nourish Religion in those that are under their care: And let them also be Exemplary in a sober and holy Conversation before those that belong to them.

And let not your Children, as far as is possible, have any bad Examples to converse with, either among your Servants, or their own Companions; *lest by walking with them they learn their way and get a blot to their Souls.* There is contagion in Example, and nothing doth more slyly insinuate itself and gain upon us than a living and familiar Pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let Children always have good Examples before them.

Especially, let Parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their Example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest Authority with it. And without this, Instruction will signifie very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our Children to do that which they see we do not practise our selves. For even Children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a Man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because Children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which Children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and is apt to make the deepest impressions upon them.

So that Parents, above all others, have one Argument to be Religious and good themselves, for the sake of their Children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so is to give them the Example of it in being good your selves. For this reason Parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your Children will follow you

you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil Example of Parents is both a temptation and encouragement to Children to Sin, because it is a kind of Authority for what they do, and looks like a justification of their wickedness.

With what reason canst thou expect that thy Children should follow thy good Instructions, when thou thy self givest them an ill Example? Thou dost but as it were beckon to them with thy head and shew them the way to Heaven by thy good Counsel, but thou takest them by the hand and leadest them in the way to Hell by thy contrary Example. When ever you swear, or tell a lye, or are passionate and furious, or come drunk into your Family, you weaken the Authority of your Commands, and lose all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own Precepts.

The Precepts of a good Man are apt to raise and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himself they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exercise of those Vertues which we plainly see they do not practise themselves. It is the *Apostle's* Argument, *Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self?* Thou that teachest thy Children to speak truth, dost thou tell a lye? Thou that sayest they must not swear, dost thou profane the Name of God by customary Oaths and Curses? Thou art unfit to be a *guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of Babes, because thou thy self hast only a form of Knowledge and of Truth in the Law*, but art destitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good Example to your Children you defeat your own Counsels and undermine the best Instructions you can give them; and they will all be spilt like Water upon the barren Sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good Education consists in wise and early Restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable Reproof and Correction. And this also is one way of Instruction: So Solomon tells us, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wisdom*: And though both these do suppose a Fault that is past, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future Caution and Amendment, ought to be sufficient in this kind, because the End is always to give measure to the Means: And where a mild and gentle Rebuke will do the business, Reproof may stop there without proceeding further; Or when that will not do, if a sharp word and a severe admonition will be effectual, the Rod may be spared.

Provided always, that our Lenity give no encouragement to Sin, and be so managed that Children may perceive that you are in good earnest, and resolved that if they will not reform they shall certainly be punish'd. And provided likewise, that your Lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the Fault. We must not use mildness in the case of a wilful and heinous Sin, especially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon such an Occasion is rather to countenance the Fault, and seems to argue that we are not sensible enough of the Enormity of it, and that we have not a due dislike and detestation for it: Such cold Reproofs as those which old Eli gave his Sons, *Why do you such things? For I hear of your evil-dealing by all this People*; that is, their Carriage was such as gave publick Scandal: Nay, my Sons; for it is not a good Report that I bear, you make the Lord's People to transgress.

Prov. 29.
15.

1 Sam. 2.
23, 24.

Such a cold Reproof as this, where the Crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their Sin; and so God interprets it, and therefore calls it, *a kicking at his Sacrifice, and a despising of his Offering.* And he threatens *Eli* with most terrible Judgments upon this very account, *because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our Severity must be proportioned to the Crime. Where the Fault is great, there greater Severity must be used; so much at least as may be an effectual Restraint for the future. Here was *Eli's* miscarriage, that in the case of so great a Fault as his Sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither Proportioned to the Crime, nor to the End of Reproof and Correction, which is Amendment for the future: But he used such a mildness in his Reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than restrain them in their vile courses: For so the Text says, that *his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some Dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle Reproof will suffice. But most Children are of that temper that Correction must be sometimes used, and a fond indulgence in this Case is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not Love but Hatred. So the Wise-man tells us, *He that spareth the Rod hateth his Son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Chasten thy Son while there is hope, and let not thy Soul Spare for his Crying.* And again, *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a Child, and the Rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* With-hold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the Rod he shall not die: Thou shalt beat him with the Rod, and shalt deliver his Soul from Hell. Again, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wisdom, but a Child left to himself bringeth his Mother to shame:* He mentions the Mother emphatically, because She many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that Correction is of great use, and often necessary; and Parents that forbear it are not only cruel to their Children, but to Themselves: For God many times punisheth those Parents very severely who have neglected this necessary piece of Discipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal Threatning than that concerning *Eli* and his House, for his fond indulgence to his Sons, who when they came to be Men, proved such horrible Scandals not only to their Father, but to the Priest's Office; and to that degree as to make the Sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the People. I will recite the Threatning at large, for an Admonition to Parents that they be not guilty in this kind; *The Lord said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle: In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his House; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his House for ever for the Iniquity which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not: And therefore I have sworn unto the House of Eli, that the Iniquity of Eli's House shall not be purged with Sacrifice nor Offering for ever.* I know very well that this enormous wickedness of *Eli's* Sons was committed by them after they were grown to be Men, but this Instance is nevertheless to my present purpose, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiss and too indulgent an Education.

Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond Parents by those very Children who have wanted Reproof and Correction: Of which

which the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable Instance in *Adonijah*, upon the mention of whose Rebellion against *David* his Father, the *Text* takes particular notice of his Father's extreme fondness of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cause of it: *For his Father had not displeased him at any time in saying why hast thou done so?* And on the contrary, the wise Son of *Syrach* tells us, that *he that chastiseth his Son shall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I shall mention as a part of good Education is, *the bringing of Children to be publickly Catechized by the Minister to prepare them for Solemn Confirmation.*

It was with a particular respect to this work of *publick Catechizing*, and by way of Introduction to it, that I at first proposed to treat thus largely of the good Education of Children, hoping it might be of good use to handle this Subject more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledge, from the Pulpit.

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly concerning the nature, and concerning the necessity and great usefulness of *Catechizing Children.*

First, For the nature of it, it is a particular way of teaching by *Question* and *Answer*, accommodated and fitted for the Instruction of Children in the Principles of Religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in *Scripture*; but *Instruction* in general is: And I doubt not but that upon this general warrant *Parents* and *Ministers* may use that way of Instruction of Children which is most fit and proper to instill into them the Principles of Religion. It is true, that the word *κατηχησῶν*, from whence our word *Catechism* doth come, is used in *Scripture* to signify teaching in general: But it hath since by *Ecclesiastical Writers* been appropriated to that particular way of Instruction which hath been long in use in the *Christian Church*, and is commonly called *Catechizing*.

Secondly, As to the necessity and great usefulness of it; *Catechizing* hath a particular advantage as to Children: Because they are subject to forgetfulness, and want of attention. Now *Catechizing* is a good Remedy against both these; because by *Questions* put to them Children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some *Answer* to the Question that is ask'd: And a *Catechism* being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary Principles of Religion, it is the more easily remembered.

The great usefulness and indeed the necessity of it plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens, that Children which have not been catechized have any clear and competent knowledge of the Principles of Religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by *Sermons*, which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed before-hand in the main Principles of Religion.

Besides, that if they have no Principles of Religion fix'd in them, they become an easie Prey to Seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our Age; and among many other dismal effects of our late Civil Confusions this is none of the least, that *publick Catechizing* was almost wholly disused, and *private* too in most Families: For had *Catechizing* of Children been continued, it is very probable that this Age would have been infested with fewer *Errors* and with fewer *Schisms*; and that there would not have been so much *Apostasy* from the *Fundamentals* of Religion. For it is, I think, a true *Observation*, that *Catechizing*, and the *History* of the *Martyrs* have been the two great *Pillars* of the *Protestant Religion*.

There being then so great a necessity and usefulness of this Way of Instruction, I would earnestly recommend the practice of it to *Parents* and *Masters of Families* with respect to their *Children* and *Servants*. For I do not think that this Work should lie wholly upon *Ministers*. You must do your part at home, who by your constant residence in your Families have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the Principles of Religion upon your *Children* and *Servants*. There you must prepare them for *publick Catechizing*, that the Work of the *Minister* may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns *Ministers*, I intend by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this *Exercise*. And I do earnestly intreat all that have *young Children* and *Servants*, to bring such of them as are fit to be publickly Catechized and instructed in the Principles of Religion: And I shall as often as shall be thought expedient spend some time in this Work, between *afternoon Prayers* and *Sermon*.

The *Catechism* to be used shall be that appointed in our *Liturgy*, which is short, and contains in it the *chief Principles* of the *Christian Religion*. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the Heads of it, suitable to the capacity of *Children*. And because this may not probably be of so great advantage to those who are of riper Years and Understandings, yet because *Children* are to be instructed as well as Men, I must intreat those who are like to carry away the least profit, to bring with them the more *patience*: Especially since I shall for their sakes, in the constant course of my *Afternoon Sermons*, more largely and fully explain the *chief Principles* of the *Christian Belief*: A Work which you know I have some time ago entred upon.

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, and with which the State of *Childhood* ends, is the bringing of *Children* to the *Bishop*, to be solemnly confirm'd, by their taking upon themselves the *Vow* which by their *Sureties* they entred into at their *Baptism*.

This is acknowledged by almost all *Se&ts* and *Parties* of *Christians* to be of *Primitive Antiquity*, and of very great use when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the *Ministers* to whose charge they belong, and with that seriousness and solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that *Confirmations* should be more frequent, and in smaller Numbers at a time; that so the *Bishop* may apply himself more particularly to every Person that is to be *Confirmed*, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could Wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the *Bishop*, that his work may not be endless, that *Ministers* would take care that none may present themselves to the *Bishop* or be presented by the *Ministers*, to be *Confirmed* a second time: Because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a *Confirmation*, which is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a *second Confirmation*, as there is for a *second Baptism*: And if any persons need so often to be *Confirmed*, it is a sign that *Confirmation* hath very little effect upon them.

II. I proceed to the *Second general Head*, which was to give some more particular *Directions* for the management of this Work of the good Education of *Children* in such a way as may be most effectual to its End.

First, Endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular *temper* and *disposition* of Children, that you may suit and apply your selves to it, and by striking in with Nature may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which Husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the *Seed* to the *Soil*, and plant in it that which is most proper for it :

*Quid quæq; ferat regio, quid quæq; recuset.
Hic segetes, illic veniunt sælicius uvæ.*

Every *Soil* is not proper for all sorts of *Grain* or *Fruit*; one ground is fit for *Corn*, another for *Vines*: And so it is in the *tempers* and *dispositions* of *Children*: Some are more capable of one *Excellency* and *Vertue* than another, and some more strongly inclined to one *Vice* than another: Which is a great *Secret* of *Nature* and *Providence*, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular *Tempers* of Children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them and manage them to the best advantage: That where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such *Seeds* and *Principles*, as, by their suitableness to their particular *Tempers*, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root: And when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the *Soil*, they will prepare it for the *Seeds* of other *Vertues*.

And so likewise when we discover in their *Nature* a more particular disposition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must with great diligence and care apply such *Instructions* and plant such *Principles* in them, as may be most effectual, to alter this evil disposition of their *Minds*; that whilst *Nature* is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way: And it is almost incredible what strange things by *Prudence* and *Patience* may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked *Disposition*.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular *Tempers* of Children, that in all our instruction and management of them, we may apply our selves to their *Nature* and hit their peculiar *Disposition*: By this means we may lead and draw them to their *Duty* in humane ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their *Temper* than constraint and necessity, which are harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when *Nature* is compell'd and forc'd, things proceed heavily: Therefore, when we are forming and fashioning Children to Religion and *Vertue*, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular *Tempers*. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct *Nature* in the way it will most easily go. Every *Temper* gives some particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them and steer them more easily: But if we take a contrary course we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctance.

Such ways of Education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of Children are like *Wind* and *Tide* together, which will make the *Work* go on amain: But those ways and methods which are applied cross to *Nature* are like *Wind* against *Tide*, which make a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do, or can expect that all *Parents* should be *Philosophers*, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

Secondly, In

Secondly, In your instruction of Children endeavour to plant in them those *Principles* of Religion and Vertue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their Lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the *Seed* you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of Mankind: *This* is to be regarded, as well as the *Ground* into which the *Seed* is cast.

Labour to beget in Children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our Duty; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of Sin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next Life and of the eternal Rewards and Recompences of it: And if these *Principles* once take root they will spread far and wide, and have a vast influence upon all their actions, and unless some powerful Lust, or temptation to Vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and stick by them as long as they live.

Many Parents, according to their best knowledge and apprehensions of Religion in which they themselves have been educated, and too often according to their Zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded Opinions in the Minds of their Children, and to fashion them to a *Party*, by infusing into them the particular Notions and Phrases of a *Sect*, which when they come to be examined have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: And by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid Principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful Doctrines of no great moment in Religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby instead of teaching them to hate Sin they fix them in Schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better *Christians* than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice as well as knowledge of the Christian Religion; believing those who do not relish their affected Phrases and uncouth Forms of speech to be ignorant of the *Mystery* of the *Gospel*, and utter strangers to the Life and Power of Godliness.

But now what is the effect of this mistaken way of Education? The *Harvest* is just answerable to the *Husbandry*,

Infelix lolium & Steriles dominantur avenæ;

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and instead of good Grain to have Cockle and Tares: *They have sown the Wind, and they shall reap the Whirlwind*; as the expression is in the *Prophet*; instead of true Religion, and of a sober and peaceable Conversation, there will come up new and wild Opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true Piety and Religion, you must take care to plant in Children the main and substantial Principles of Christianity, which may give them a general *byass* to holiness and goodness, and not to little particular Opinions, which being once fix'd in them by the strong prejudice of Education will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of Sin and Vice: So soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the Roots. This is like the weeding of Corn, which is a necessary piece of good Husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the Soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: But if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the Root and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your Children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A Vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its roots it will be a very difficult matter to clear the Ground of it. A Child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with Vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of Parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of Children it will be one of the hardest things in the World to give a stop to it. It is the *Apostle's* caution to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of Sin*, which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in Children, and kill those young Serpents as soon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

Fourthly, Bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the *publick Worship* of God, where He hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in *Zion*, the place of God's publick Worship, where *the Lord hath commanded the blessing even Life for evermore*: There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Grace in us: This is the *Pool* where the *Angel* useth to come and to *move the Waters*: Bring your Children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an Opportunity of being *healed*.

And when they come from the *Church*, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learn'd there: This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their Memories with greater care, and will fix it there so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their Minds.

Fifthly, Be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of Religion and Vertue, in such Instances as their Understanding and age are capable of. Teach them some short and proper *Forms of Prayer* to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every Morning and Evening. A great many Children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of Mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will after a little while make that easie and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and *Practice* do mutually promote and help forward one another. *Knowledge* prepares and disposeth for *Practice*, and *Practice* is the best way to perfect *Knowledge* in any kind. Mere *Speculation* is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by *Practice* and *Experience*. The most exact skill in *Geography* is nothing compar'd with the knowledge of that Man, who besides the *Speculative* part hath travell'd over and carefully view'd the Countries he hath read of. The most knowing Man in the Art and Rules of *Navigation* is no body in comparison of an experienced *Pilote* and *Seaman*. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere *Speculation* as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For Men may

may easily mistake Rules, but frequent Practice and Experience are seldom deceived. Give me a Man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That Saying of our B. Saviour, *If any Man will do my will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self*, is a clear determination of this matter, namely, That they understand the Will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe his Perfections in our Lives and Actions; to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, and *merciful* as He is.

Therefore when the Minds of Children are once thoroughly possess'd with the true Principles of Religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their Duty in the several Instances of it, than to speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels: Unto Man he said, *Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job 28. 28. Hereby, saith St. John, we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments: He that saith I know him and keepeth not his Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not him. 1 Joh. 2. 2, 3, 4.

Xenophon tells us, that the Persians instead of making their Children learned taught them to be *virtuous*; and instead of filling their heads with fine Speculations, taught them *honesty*, and *sincerity*, and *resolution*; and endeavoured to make them *wise* and *valiant*, *just* and *temperate*. Lycurgus also in the institution of the Lacedæmonian Common-wealth took no care about Learning, but only about the Lives and Manners of their Children: Though I should think that the care of both is best, and that Learning would very much help to form the manners of Children, and to make them both wiser and better Men: And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a Lawgiver, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his Institution: Because Learning if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better Government of any Kingdom or Common-wealth.

Sixthly, There must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of Education, and more particularly in the Instruction of Children. There must be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*, as the Prophet expresseth it. The Principles of Religion and Vertue must be instill'd and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure as they are capable of receiving them: For Children are narrow-mouth'd Vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once. Isa. 28. 10.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of Religion and goodness by degrees, till Holiness and Vertue have taken root, and they be well settled and confirm'd in a good course. Now this requires constant attendance and even the patience of the Husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some Children the Seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be a considerable time before they appear above-ground; it is long before they shoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very considerable: Which, as an ingenious Author observes, *should excite the care and prevent the despair of Parents*: For if their Children be not such speedy Spreaders and Branchers as the Vine, they may perhaps prove Sir H. W.

— proles tardè-crescentis Olivæ.

It

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectifie a perverse Disposition. It is more easie to *palliate* the corruption of Nature, but the *cure* of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be cover'd and conceal'd, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It must first be check'd and stopp'd in its course, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and Lastly, To all these means we must add our constant and earnest Prayers to God for our Children, that his Grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them vertuous inclinations and towardly dispositions for goodness: And that he would be pleased to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful Assistance and Blessing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. *Parents* may plant, and *Ministers* may water, but it is *God that must give the increase*.

Be often then upon your knees for your Children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness commend them to God and to the power of his Grace which alone is able to sanctifie them. Apply your selves to the *Father of lights*; from whom comes every good and perfect gift: Beg his *H. Spirit*, and ask Divine knowledge and wisdom for them of Him, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man: Beseech Him to season their tender years with his *Fear*, which is the beginning of *Wisdom*: Pray for them as *Abraham* did for *Ishmael*, *Oh that Ishmael may live in thy sight*.

Many Parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to Prayer, earnest and importunate Prayer to God as their last Refuge. *Monica*, the Mother of *St. Austin*, by the constancy and importunity of her Prayers, obtained of God the conversion of her Son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an Instrument of good to the Church of God: According to what *St. Ambrose Bishop of Milain*, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent Prayers for her Son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat*, *It cannot be*, says he, *that a Son of so many Prayers and Tears should miscarry*. God's Grace is free, but it is not likely but that God will at last give in this Blessing to our earnest Prayers and faithful Endeavours.

Therefore pray for them *without ceasing, pray and faint not*. Great importunity in Prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer: Our *B. Saviour* spake two *Parables* on purpose to encourage us herein: Not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our importunity; but because it is an Argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great Goodness: And to them that believe all things are possible, says our *B. Lord*, *To whom, &c.*

S E R M O N LIII.

O F T H E

E D U C A T I O N *of* C H I L D R E N.

P R O V. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I Proceed to the next general Head which I proposed, namely,

III. *To discover some of the more remarkable and common Miscarriages in the management of this Work.* I do not hereby mean gross neglects for want of care, but mistakes and miscarriages for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in Parents and Instructors. And I shall for Method's sake reduce the more considerable and common Miscarriages to these three Heads.

First, In matter of Instruction.

Secondly, In matter of Example.

Thirdly, In matter of Reproof and Correction.

I. In matter of *Instruction.* Parents do very often mainly miscarry in not teaching their Children the true *difference* between *Good* and *Evil*, and the *degrees* of them: As when we teach them any thing is a Sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a Sin which in truth is so: Or when we teach them to lay more stress and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only *convenient* to be in the highest degree *necessary*, or that which it may be is only *inconvenient*, or may be an occasion of *Scandal* to some weak Christians, to be a Sin *in its own Nature damnable*.

Parents do likewise lay too great a weight upon things when they are as diligent to instruct them in lesser things, and as strict in enjoining them, and as severe in punishing the commission or neglect of them, according as they esteem them *good* or *evil*, as if they were the *weightier things of the Law* and matters of the greatest moment in Religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning Parents that have with great severity restrained their Children in the wearing of their Hair: Nay, I can remember since the wearing of it below their Ears was looked upon as a Sin of the first magnitude; and when *Ministers* generally, whatever their *Text* was, did in every *Sermon* either find or make an occasion with great severity to reprove the great Sin of *long hair*; and if they saw any

any one in the *Congregation* guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some Parents that have strictly forbidden their Children the use of some sorts of *Recreations* and *Games* under the notion of heinous Sins, upon a mistake, that because there was in them a mixture of *Fortune* and *Skill* they were therefore unlawful; a Reason which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but humane Laws may for very prudent reasons either restrain or forbid the use of these *Games*, because of the boundless expence both of *Money* and *Time* which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps, the same Persons, that would not only allow but even encourage their Children to despise the very *Service of God* under some *Forms*, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be *Superstitious* or *Factions*. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all Religion.

And how many Parents teach their Children *doubtful Opinions*, and lay great stress upon them as if they were *saving* or *damning* Points; and hereby let such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and *circumstances* of God's Worship as if the very *Being* of a *Church* and the *Essence* of *Religion* were concern'd in them?

These certainly are great *Mistakes*, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference as *good* and *evil*, *lawful* and *unlawful*, *indifferent* and *necessary*. For when Children come to be Men, and to have a freer and larger view of the World, and shall find by the contrary practice of very wise and serious Persons, that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a *Sin* which their Parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a *Lye*, this may make them apt to question whether any thing be a *Sin*: And the violence which they offer to their Consciences, and the *strain* that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the Principles of their Education, doth many times open a gap for great and real Sins.

Besides, that Children which are bred up in high Prejudices *for or against* indifferent *Opinions* or *Practices* in Religion, do usually when they are grown up prove to be Men of narrow and contracted Spirits, peevish, and toward, and uncharitable, and many times great *Bigots* and *Zealots* either in the way of *Superstition* or *Faction*, according to the *Principles* which have been instill'd into them to *byass* them either way. And very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their Prejudices, as to become wise and peaceable and substantial Christians.

In short if we carefully observe it, we shall find that when Children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their Religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious Christians, as the *Civil* behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskillfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous Education.

II. In matter of *Example*. There are many Parents whose Lives are Exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their Children. It is an old Rule, and I think a very good one,

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia,

There is a very great reverence due to Children. There are many things which are not Sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all persons. There are some words and actions so trivial and light, that they are not fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of Conversation which is only proper among Equals in Age and Quality, which if we use before our Superiors and Betters, we seem to contemn them; if before our Inferiors, they will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be consider'd, that Children do not understand the exact limits of good and evil, so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger of shewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a Precipice, or near a dangerous Place, where yet Men that will take care may go safely enough. And therefore Parents should be very careful to keep their Children from the Confines of Evil, and at as great a distance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should ever be temper'd with gravity and circumspection, that Children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to Sin, or carry them to the Borders of Vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

III. In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction*; many Religious and careful Parents are guilty of two great Miscarriages in this part of Education.

First, Of too much *rigor* and *severity*; which, especially with some sort of Tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon Children should be to allure them to their Duty, and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of Goodness; by *Praise* and *Reward*, and sometimes by *Shame* and *Disgrace*: And if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to Severity; especially not to great Severities, which are very unsuitable to Humane Nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable *Reproof* or *Correction* when there is occasion for it, may do very well; but *Whips* are not the *Cords* of a *Man*: Humane Nature may be driven by them, but it must be led by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the Pictures of *Joy* and *Gladness* to be set round about his *School*, to signify that the business of Education ought to be rendered as pleasant as may be: And indeed Children stand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to Learning and Goodness. *Metus baud diuturni Magister officii*, says *Tully*; *Fear alone will not teach a Man his Duty* and hold him to it for any long time: For when that is removed, Nature will break loose and do like it self. Besides, that frequent *Corrections* make Punishments to lose their Awe and Force, and are apt to spoil the Disposition of Children and to harden them against Shame; and after a while they will despise *Correction*, when they find they can endure it.

Great Severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended. And many times those who were bred up in a very severe *School*, hate Learning ever after for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them: And so likewise an endeavour to bring Children to Piety and Goodness by unreasonable strictness and rigour does often beget in them a lasting disgust and Prejudice against Religion, and teacheth them, as *Erasmus* says

says, *virtutem simul odisse & nōsse*, to hate Vertue at the same time that they teach them to know it: For by this means Vertue is represented to the minds of Children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together: So that whenever they think of Religion and Vertue, they remember the Severity which was wont to accompany the Instructions about it; and the natural hatred which Men have for Punishment is by this means derived upon Religion it self. And indeed how can it be expected that Children should love their Duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of Rods shak'd over them?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious Instances of great miscarriage, than in the Children of very strict and severe Parents, of which I can give no other account but this, that Nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly: It hath something in it like the Spring of an Engine, which being forcibly press'd does upon the first liberty return back with so much* the greater violence. In like manner the vicious dispositions of Children, when restrain'd merely by the severity of Parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose and from under their Discipline.

Secondly, Another Miscarriage in this matter is, when Reproof and Correction are accompanied and managed with Passion. This is to betray one Fault, and perhaps a greater in the punishment of another. Besides, that this makes Reproof and Correction to look like Revenge and Hatred, which usually does not persuade and reform but provoke and exasperate. And this probably may be one reason of the Apostle's admonition, *Parents provoke not your Children unto wrath*, because that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of Physick, which ought never to be administred in Passion, but upon counsel and good advice.

And that Passion is incident to Parents upon this occasion, the Apostle Heb. 12. tells us when he says, that *the Parents of our flesh chasten us for their pleasure*; that is, they do it many times to gratifie their Passion; but God chastens us for our profit, not in Anger but with a design to do us good; And can we have a better Pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A Father is as it were a Prince and a Judge in his Family: There he gives Laws, and inflicts Censures and Punishments upon Offenders. But how mis-becoming a thing would it be to see a Judge pass Sentence upon a Man in Choler? It is the same thing to see a Father in the heat and fury of his Passion correct his Child. If a Father could but see himself in this Mood, and how ill his Passion becomes him, instead of being angry with his Child he would be out of Patience with himself. I proceed to the next thing I proposed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of the Proposition contained in the Text, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage and to have so good and lasting an influence upon their whole Lives.

I confess there are some wild and savage Natures, monstrous and prodigious Tempers, hard as the Rocks, and barren as the Sand upon the Seashore; which discover strong and early propensions to vice, and a violent antipathy to Goodness. Such Tempers are next to desperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the Grace of God and the Religious Care of Parents.

I hope such Tempers as these are very rare, though God is pleased they should sometimes appear in the World, as instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of Humane Nature, and of the great need of Divine Grace.

But

But surely there is no Temper that is absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good. This would be so terrible an Objection against the Providence of God as would be very hard to be answered. God be thanked, most Tempers are tractable to good Education, and there is very great probability of the good success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And for the Confirmation of this *Truth* I shall instance in *two* very great *Advantages* of a Religious and vertuous Education of Children.

1st. It gives Religion and Vertue the advantage of the first Possession.

2^{dly}, The Advantage of Habit and Custom.

First, Good Education gives Religion and Vertue the *Advantage* of the *first Possession*. The Mind of Man is an active Principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which offers it self. So soon as Reason puts forth it self, and the Understanding begins to be exercised, the Mind of Man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the *Waters of Life* and the *pure streams* of *Goodness* to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy *Puddles* and impure *Pleasures* of this World.

Now since Children will be busying their Minds about something, it is good that they should be entertain'd with the best things, and with the best Notions and Principles of which their Understanding and Age are capable. It is a happy thing to be Principled, and, as I may say, *Prejudiced* the better way, and that Religion should get the first possession of their Hearts. For it is certainly a great Advantage to Religion to be planted in a tender and fresh Soil. And it *Parents* be careless and neglect this advantage, the *Enemy* will be sure to sow his *Tares* whilst the *Husbandman* is asleep.

Therefore we should prevent the *Devil* by giving *God* and *Goodness* an early possession of our Children, and by letting Him into their Hearts betimes. *Possession* is a great Point, and it is of a mighty consequence to have Nature planted with good Seeds before vicious Inclinations spring up and grow into Strength and Habit.

I know that there is a spiteful *Proverb* currant in the World, and the *Devil* hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early Piety, *A young Saint and an old Devil*; but notwithstanding this, a young Saint is most likely to prove an old one. *Solomon* to be sure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true *Proverbs* as any body hath done since: *Him* only excepted who was a much *greater* and *wiser* Man than *Solomon*.

Secondly, Good Education gives likewise the *Advantage* of *Habit* and *Custom*; and *Custom* is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his *Epistles* says of it, *efficacissimus omnium rerum Magister, the most powerful and effectual Master in every kind*. It is an acquired and a sort of *Second Nature*, and next to Nature it self a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all Humane actions. Men love those things and do them with ease to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And on the contrary Men go against Custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, *that* Custom is most strong which is begun in Childhood: And we see in Experience the strange power of Education in forming persons to Religion and Vertue. Now Education is nothing but certain Customs planted in Childhood, and which have taken deep Root whilst Nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience how dangerous an evil Habit and Custom is, and how hard to be alter'd. Therefore the *Cretians*, when they would

would curse a Man to purpose, wish'd that the *Gods* would engage him in some *bad Custom*, looking upon a Man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So on the other Side, to be engaged in a *good Custom* is an unspeakable advantage; especially for Children to be habituated to a holy and vertuous course, before the Habits of Sin and Vice have taken root and are confirm'd in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: But yet this ought not to discourage us, because it is certain in Experience that a contrary *Custom* hath done much in many Cases, even where *Nature* hath been strongly inclined the other way. *Demosthenes* did by great Resolution and almost infinite Pains, and after a long Habit, alter the natural imperfection of his Speech, and even in despite of Nature became the most eloquent Man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a *Demonstration*, for *what hath been done may be done*.

So that it is not universally true which *Aristotle* says, *That Nature cannot be altered*. It is true indeed in the Instance which he gives of throwing a Stone upward; you cannot, says he, by any Custom, nay though you fling it up never so often, teach a Stone to ascend of it self: And so it is in many other Instances in which *Nature* is *peremptory*: But Nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude: As we see in young Trees, which though they naturally grow straight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, *Moral* inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary Custom.

Indeed Children when they come to be Men should take great care, that they do not owe their Religion only to *Custom*; but they should upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their *Choice*. And yet for all that we must not deny the best Religion in the World this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for Children to be inclin'd to that which when they come to understand themselves they would make their Choice, if they were indifferent: But an indifferency cannot be preserved in Children: And therefore, since they will certainly be *biassed* one way or other, there is all the reason in the World why we should endeavour to *biass* them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best, but if they love their Children they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good and do what is best.

I come now to the *last Head* I proposed, which was,

V. To endeavour by the most powerful *Arguments* I can offer, to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great Care and Conscience.

If the foregoing *Discourse* be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great Duty? who, neither by *Instruction*, nor *Example*, nor *Restraint* from evil, do endeavour to make their Children good. Some Parents are such *Monsters*, I had almost said *Devils*, as not to know how to give good things to their Children; but instead of bread give them a stone, instead of fish give them a serpent, instead of an egg give them a scorpion, as our Saviour expresseth it.

These are *evil* indeed, who train up their Children for ruin and destruction; in the service of the *Devil*, and in the Trade and Mystery of iniquity: Who instead of teaching them the *Fear of the Lord*, infuse into them the Principles of *Atheism*, and *Irreligion*, and *Prophaneness*: Instead of teaching them to love and reverence Religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock both of *Sin* and *Holiness*: Instead of training them up in
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the knowledge of the *H. Scriptures* which are able to make men wise unto Salvation, they do *ædificare ad Gehennam*, they edifie them for Hell, by teaching them to profane that *Holy Book*, and to abuse the *Word of God* which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into Jest and Raillery: Instead of teaching them to Pray and to *bless* the *Name of God*, they teach them to *blaspheme* that *Great and terrible Name*, and to *prophane* it by their continual *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: And instead of bringing them to *God's Church*, they carry them to the *Devil's Chappels*, to *Playhouses* and *Places of debauchery*, those *Schools* and *Nurseries* of *Lewdness* and *Vice*.

Thus they, who ought to be the great *Teachers* and *Examples* of *Holiness* and *Vertue*, are the chief *Encouragers* and *Patterns* of *Vice* and *Wickedness* in their Children; and instead of *restraining* them from Evil, they *countenance* them in it, and check all forward inclinations to Goodness; till at last they make them *ten times more the Children of Wrath*, than they were by that *corrupt Nature* which they derived from them; and hereby *treasure up* both for their Children and *themselves*, *wrath against the Day of wrath* and the *Revelations of the righteous Judgments of God*.

But I hope there are few or none *such* here. They do not use to frequent *God's House* and *Worship*. And therefore I shall apply my self to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good Education of their Children. And for the greater conviction of such Parents, I shall offer to them the following *Considerations*.

First, Consider what a sad *Inheritance* you have conveyed to your Children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved Natures, evil and vicious Inclinations: You have begotten them in your own Image and likeness, so that *by Nature* they are *Children of wrath*. Now methinks Parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that *Curse*; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken Estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a Man hath by *Treason* tainted his *Blood* and forfeited his *Estate*, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his Children, and think of the Injury he hath done to them by his Fault? And how solicitous is he, before he die, to petition the *King* for favour to his Children? How earnestly doth he charge his Friends to be careful of them and kind to them? That by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their *Fortune* which hath been ruin'd by his *Fault*.

And have Parents such a tenderness for their Children, in reference to their Estate and Condition in this World; and have they none for the good estate of their Souls and their eternal Condition in another World? If you are sensible that their *Blood* is tainted, and that their best *Fortunes* are ruin'd by your sad *Misfortune*; Why do you not bestir your selves for the repairing of *God's Image* in them? Why do you not *travel in birth till Christ be formed in them*? Why do you not pray earnestly to *God* and give *Him* no rest, who hath *reprieved*, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his Grace to them also, and grant them the *Blessings* of his *New Covenant*?

All your Children are begotten of the *Bond-woman*; therefore we should pray as *Abraham* did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight*: O that these Sons of *Hagar* may be Heirs of a *Blessing*.

Secondly, Consider in the next place, that good Education is the very best Inheritance that you can leave to your Children. It is a wise *Saying* of *Solomon*, that *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance*; but surely an *Inheritance* without

out *Wisdom* and *Vertue* to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many Parents are there who omit no Care and Industry to get an Estate that they may leave it to their Children, but use no means to form their Minds and Manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great Poverty and Straits?

Dost thou love thy Child? This is True love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your Children, this may be all the Fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good Education. All other things are uncertain. You may raise your Children to *Honour*, and settle a Noble *Estate* upon them to support it. You may leave them, as you think, to faithful *Guardians*, and by kindness and obligation procure them many *Friends*: And when you have done all this, their *Guardians* may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the Changes and Revolutions of the World their *Honours* may slip from under them, and their *Riches* may take to themselves wings and fly away: And when these are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the Frosts of Adversity, their *Friends* will fall off like leaves in *Autumn*. This is a sore evil, which yet I have seen under the Sun.

But if the good Education of your Children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an Inheritance for them which is out of the reach of Fortune, and cannot be taken from them. Crates the Philosopher used to stand in the highest Places of the City, and to cry out to the Inhabitants, O ye People! why do you toil to get Estates for your Children, when you take no care of their Education? This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the Shoe, but none of the Foot that is to wear it; to take great Pains for an Estate for your Children, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undoe them, but none to make them happy.

Thirdly, Consider that by a careful and Religious Education of your Children you provide for your own Comfort and Happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the Comfort of a good Conscience and of having done your Duty. If they be good, they are matter of great Comfort and Joy to their Parents. A wise Son, saith Solomon, maketh a glad Father. It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The Son of Syrach, among several things for which he reckons a Man happy, mentions this in the first place, He that bath joy of his Children. Ecclus 25.
7.

On the contrary, in wicked Children the honour of a Family fails, our Name withers, and in the next Generation will quite be blotted out: Whereas a hopeful Posterity is a prospect of a kind of Eternity. We cannot leave a better and more lasting Monument of our selves, than in wise and virtuous Children. Buildings and Books are but dead things in comparison of these living Memorials of our selves.

By the good Education of your Children you provide for your selves some of the best Comforts both for this World and the other. For this World; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of Comfort, I mean the time of Sicknes and old Age. Wise Men have been wont to lay up some *præsidia Senectutis*, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy Time, as Books and Friends, or the like. But there is no such external Comfort at such a time as good and dutiful Children. They will then be the light of our Eyes, and the Cordial of our fainting Spirits; and will recompence all our former care of them by their present care of us: And when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our

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Touth as it were renewed, and our selves flourishing again in our Children: The Son of Syrach speaking of the Comfort which a good Father hath in a well educated Son, *Though he dye, says he, yet he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived he saw and rejoyced in him, and when he died he was not sorrowful.*

Ecclus. 30.
4, 5.

Whereas, on the contrary, a foolish Son is, as Solomon tells us, a heaviness to his Mother, the miscarriage of a Child being apt most tenderly to affect the Mother. Such Parents as neglect their Children, do as it were provide so many Pains and Aches for themselves against they come to be Old. And rebellious Children are to their infirm and aged Parents so many aggravations of an evil Day, so many burthens of their Age: They help to bow them down and to bring their gray hairs so much the sooner with sorrow to the grave. They do usually repay their Parents all the neglects of their Education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good Children will likewise be an unspeakable Comfort to us in the Other World. When we come to appear before God at the Day of Judgment, to be able to say to Him, *Lo! here am I and the Children which thou hast given me:* How will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our Heads with Joy in that Day?

Fourthly, Consider that the surest Foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good Education of Children. Families are increased by Children, and Cities and Nations are made up of Families. And this is a matter of so great Concernment both to Religion and the Civil happiness of a Nation, that anciently the best constituted Commonwealths did commit this care to the Magistrate more than to Parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their Children for Hostages, they offer'd rather to deliver to Him twice as many Men; so much did they value the loss of their Countries Education. But now amongst us this Work lies chiefly upon Parents. There are several ways of reforming Men; by the Laws of the Civil Magistrate, and by the publick Preaching of Ministers. But the most likely and hopeful Reformation of the World must begin with Children. Wholsome Laws and good Sermons are but slow and late ways: The timely and the most compendious way is good Education. This may be an effectual Prevention of evil, whereas all after-ways are but Remedies, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our Laws leave so much to Parents, our Care should be so much the greater: and we should remember that we bring up our Children for the Publick, and that if they live to be Men, as they come out of our hands they will prove a publick Happiness or Mischief to the Age. So that we can no way better deserve of Mankind and be greater Benefactors to the World, than by Peopling it with a Righteous Offspring. Good Children are the hopes of Posterity, and we cannot leave the World a better Legacy than well disciplin'd Children. This gives the World the best Security that Religion will be Propagated to Posterity, and that the Generations to come shall know God, and the Children that are to be born shall fear the Lord.

This was the great Glory of Abraham, next to his being the Friend of God, that he was the Father of the Faithful. And the careful Education of Children, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is so honourable to Parents, that God himself would not pass it by in Abraham without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation: *I know Abraham, says God, that he will command his Children and his Household after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.*

Gen. 18.
19.

Fifthly

Fifthly, Consider yet further, the great Evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are Manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in *this*, the final miscarriage and ruin of Children. Do but leave depraved corrupt Nature to its self, and it will take its own Course, and the end of it in all probability will be miserable.

If the generous Seeds of Religion and Vertue be not carefully sown in the tender Minds of Children, and those Seeds be not cultivated by good Education, there will certainly spring up *Briars* and *Thorns*, of which Parents will not only feel the inconvenience, but every body else that comes near them.

Neglectis urenda filix innascitur Agris.

If the Ground be not planted with something that is good, it will bring forth that which is either useless or hurtful, or both; for *Nature* is seldom barren, it will either bring forth *useful Plants*, or *Weeds*.

We are naturally inclined to Evil, and the neglect of Education puts Children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclin'd to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to Sin and Vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their Liberty and Choice: they are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction: Or if they be Patient to hear it, they have no Power to follow it, being bound in the Chains of their Sins, and *led Captive by Satan at his pleasure*. And when they have brought themselves into this condition, their *Ruin* seems to be *sealed*, and without a Miracle of God's Grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the Mischief of this Neglect end here, but it extends it self to the *Publick*, and to *Posterity*. If we neglect the good Education of our Children, they will in all probability prove bad Men; and *these* will neglect their Children; and so the Foundation of an endless Mischief is laid; and our Posterity will be bad Members both of Church and Common-wealth.

If they be neglected in matter of *Instruction*, they will either be *ignorant* or *erroneous*: either they will not mind Religion, or they will disturb the Church with new and wild Opinions: And I fear, that the neglect of instructing and *Catechising* Youth, of which this Age hath been so grossly guilty, hath made it so Fruitful of Errors and strange Opinions.

But if besides *this*, no care be taken of their *Lives* and *Manners*, they will become burthens of the Earth, and Pests of Humane Society, and so much Poison and Infection let abroad into the World.

Sixthly and *Lastly*, Parents should often consider that the neglect of this Duty will not only involve them in the *inconvenience* and *shame*, and *sorrow*, of their Childrens Miscarriage, but in a great measure in the *guilt* of it: They will have a great share in all the Evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the Sins they commit. If the Children bring forth wild and sowre Grapes, the Parents Teeth will be set on edge.

The temporal mischiefs and inconveniences which come from the careless Education of Children as to *Credit*, *Health* and *Estate*, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your Children; these methinks should awaken your *care* and *diligence*: But what is this to the *guilt* which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the Sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other World, and bring new fuel to Hell, to heat that Furnace hotter upon you.

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However, this is certain, that *Parents* must one Day be accountable for all their neglects of their *Children*: And so likewise shall *Ministers* and *Masters of Families* for their *People* and *Servants*, so far as they had the Charge of them.

And what will *Parents* be able to say to God at the Day of Judgment for all their neglects of their *Children*, in matter of *Instruction*, and *Example*, and *Restraint* from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to Judgment, and say to you, *Behold! the Children which I have given you; They were ignorant, and you instructed them not; They made themselves vile, and you restrained them not: Why did not you teach them at Home, and bring them to Church to the Publick Ordinances and Worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of Piety and Devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good Instruction, but you gave them bad Example: And lo! they have followed you to Hell, to be an addition to your Torment there.*

Unnatural Wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect destroyed those, whose Happiness by so many bonds of Duty and Affection you were obliged to procure; *Behold! the Books are now open, and there is not one Prayer upon Record that ever you put up for your Children: There is no Memorial, no not so much as of one Hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a Sense of God, and to the Knowledge of their Duty: But on the contrary it appears, that you have many ways contrived their Misery, and contributed to their Ruin, and helped forward their Damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? How could you thus hate your own Flesh, and hate your own Souls? How much better had it been for them, and how much better for you, that they had never been born?*

Would not such a heavy Charge as this make every Joynt of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the Heart, and pierce your very Souls, to have your *Children* challenge you in that Day, and say to you one by one, *Had you been as careful to teach me the good Knowledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it; Had you been but as forward to instruct me in my Duty, as I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not been with me as it is at this Day; I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal Doom which is just ready to be pass'd upon me. Cursed be the Man that begat me, and the Paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to you that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing. Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproach'd by our Children in that great and terrible Day of the Lord?*

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all this, if it be possible, awaken *Parents* to a Sense of their Duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many *Parents* are as to the Religious Education of their *Children*, I cannot but think of that Saying of *Augustus* concerning *Herod*, *Better be his Dog than his Child*: I think it was spoken to another purpose, but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: Better to be some Men's Dogs, or Hawks or Horses, than their *Children*: For they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their *Children* for eternal Happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *Train up a Child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it*: That neither your *Children* may be miserable by your Fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a Duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay these things seriously to heart: For his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*; To Whom, with Thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory both now and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N L I V .

O F T H E

Advantages of an Early P I E T Y .

Preached in the

Church of St. Lawrence-Jewry, in the Year, 1662.

E C C L E S . X I I . I .

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth ;
while the evil days come not, nor the years draw
nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

IN the former Discourses, concerning the Education of Children, I have carried the Argument through the state of *Childhood* to the beginning of the next step of their Age which we call *Youth*; when they come to exercise their Reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that *Solemn Vow* which was made for them by their *Sureties* in *Baptism*.

To encourage them to set seriously and in good earnest about this Work, I shall now add another Discourse concerning the *Advantages of an Early Piety*. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these Words of *Solomon*, in his Book called *Ecclesiastes* or the *Preacher*: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no Pleasure in them.*

It will not be necessary to give an Account of the *Context* any further than to tell you, that this Book of the *Royal Preacher* is a lively description of the *Vanity* of the World in general, and particularly of the Life of Man. This is the main Body of his *Sermon*, in which there are here and there scattered many serious Reflections upon our selves, and very weighty Considerations to quicken our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkness which will be many*, as the *Preacher* tells us in the Chapter before the *Text*.

Among these is the Admonition and Advice in the Words of the *Text*: Which do indeed concern those that are *Young*, but yet will afford useful matter of Meditation to Persons of all Ages and Conditions whatsoever: Of great thankfulness to Almighty God from those who by the Grace of God, and his Blessing upon a pious Education, have entred upon a Religious course betimes: And of a deep Sorrow and Repentance to those who have neglected and let slip this best Opportunity of their Lives; and of taking up a firm Resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: And to them more especially, who are grown old
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and have not yet begun this great and necessary Work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their Duty; lest the Opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

The *Text* contains a *Duty*, which is to *remember our Creator*; and a *Limitation* of it, more especially to one particular *Age* and *Time* of our Life; *in the Days of our Youth*: Not to exclude any other Age, but to lay a particular *Emphasis* and weight upon this: *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, that is, more especially in this Age of thy Life: To intimate to us, both that this is the fittest Season, and that we cannot begin this Work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to *Old Age*: *When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them*: This is a Description of *Old Age*, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a Burthen than a Pleasure.

In the handling of these *Words*, I shall do these *three* things:

First, I shall consider the Nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoyn'd, and that is to *remember God*.

Secondly, I shall consider what there is in the Notion of God as *Creator* which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of Him.

Thirdly, I shall consider the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular Age of our Lives, *the Days of our Youth*: Why we should begin this Work then, and not put it off to the Time of Old Age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoyn'd, which is to *remember our Creator*. For the understanding of which *Expression* and others of the like Nature in *Scripture*, it is to be consider'd that it is very usual in *Scripture* to express *Religion* and the *whole Duty* of Man by some eminent *Act*, or *Principle*, or *Part of Religion*: Sometimes by the *Knowledge* of God, and by *Faith* in Him; and very frequently by the *Fear* and by the *Love* of God; because these are the great *Principles* and *Parts* of *Religion*: And so likewise, though not so frequently, *Religion* is express'd by the *Remembrance* of God: Now *Remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember God is to have him actually in our Minds, and upon all proper occasions to revive the thoughts of Him, and as *David* expresseth it, to *set him always before us*: *I set the Lord*, says he, *always before me*, that is, God was continually present to his Mind and thoughts.

And in opposition to this we find wicked men in *Scripture* described by the contrary quality, *forgetfulness* of God: So they are described in *Job*; *Such are the Paths of them that forget God*, that is, of the wicked: And the same description *David* gives of them. *The wicked*, says he, *shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God*: And elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked Man, that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

Job 8. 13.

Psal. 9. 17.

Psal. 10. 4.

And the course of a Religious Life is not unfitly express'd by our *Remembrance of God*. For to *remember* a Person or Think is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting Occasions; to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance of them does require, or prompt us to. To remember a Friend, is to be ready upon occasion to do him all good offices: To remember a kindness and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and require

requite it when there is an Opportunity: To remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: And in a word to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently and in our most serious and retired thoughts to consider that there is such a *Being* as *God* is; of all *Power* and *Perfection*, who made us and all other things, and hath given us *Laws* to live by, suitable to our *Natures*; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward and punish us; very often in this *World*, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of *God* and of his infinite Perfections, and to live continually under the *Power* and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and will bring every work into Judgment, and every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil; as the *Preacher* tells us in the conclusion of this *Sermon*.

The Duty then here required of us, is so soon as we arrive at the use of Reason and the exercise of our Understandings, to take *God* into Consideration, and to begin a Religious Course of Life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our Days and the flower and strength of them to his Service: Whilst our Mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the *Being* that is above us; and in all our designs and actions to take *God* into consideration, and to do every thing in his Fear, and with an eye to his Glory. Remember thy Creator, that is, honour, fear, love, obey and serve Him; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of *God*, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall in the next place consider, what there is in the Notion of *God* as our Creator that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of *God*. The *Text* does not barely require us to remember *God*, but to remember him as the Author and Founder of our Beings: Remember thy Creator. And there is certainly some particular Emphasis in it, so that *God* considered under the Notion of our Creator is apt to strike us with a particular regard and awe of him. And that upon a threefold account; as *Creation* is a sensible demonstration to us, 1st. Of the *Being*. 2^{dly}. Of the *Power*, and 3^{dly}. Of the *Goodness* of *God*.

First, Of his *Being*. The *Creation* is of all other the most sensible and obvious Argument of a Deity. Other considerations may work upon our Reason and Understanding, but this doth as it were bring *God* down to our senses. So often as we look up to Heaven, or down upon the Earth; upon our Selves, or into our selves; upon the things without us, and round about us: Which way soever we turn our eyes, we are encounter'd with plain evidences of a Superior Being, which made us and all other things: Every thing which we behold with our eyes doth in some way or other represent *God* to us and bring him to our minds, so as we cannot avoid the sight of Him if we would. So the *Psalmist* tells us; *The Heavens declare the Glory of God*, Psal. 19. 1. and the *Firmament* shews the work of his hands. And so likewise *St. Paul*: Rom. 1. 20. *The invisible things of Him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen being understood by the things which are made; even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

Secondly, As the *Creation* is a demonstration of *God's* infinite Power. And this Consideration is apt to work upon our Fear, the most wakeful Passion of all

all other in the Soul of Man : Insomuch that the *Atheist* would fain ascribe the Original apprehension and belief of a Deity to the natural Fears of Men; *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor, Fear first made Gods*; and by this means would fain persuade us, that it is so far from being true that God is our *Creator*, that He is meerly the *Creature* of our own vain *Fear* and *Imagination*.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of Him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; because He who made us and all other things, if we neglect Him and forget so great a Benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of Being. Therefore *Remember thy Creator*, and despise or forget him at thy utmost peril.

Thirdly, As the *Creation* is a demonstration of the *Goodness* of God to his *Creatures*. This Consideration of God as our *Creator*, doth naturally suggest to our minds, that his Goodness brought us into Being; and that if Being be a Benefit, God is the Fountain and Author of it, that his Goodness called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; for *of his good Pleasure we are and were created*. He was under no necessity of doing it; for He was from eternal Ages happy in himself before we were, and would have been so to all eternity though we had never been; nor was it possible He could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And He is not only our *Creator* as He gave us our Beings at first, but likewise as we are preserved and continued in Life by the same Goodness which first gave us Life and Breath; for *of his Goodness we ARE as well as were created*.

And can we forget so great a Benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us*? Can we chuse but remember the Founder of our Beings, the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives; and so soon as we arrive at the use of Reason, and discover this great Benefactor to whom we owe our Lives and all the Blessings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to say with *David*, *O come, let us Worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker: For He is the Lord our God, it is He that hath made us and not we our selves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture*. I proceed to consider in the

III. and last place, The Reason of the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular *Age* of our Lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them: NOW; in the days of thy Youth*; by which *Solomon* plainly designs two things.

First, To engage young Persons to begin this great and necessary Work of Religion betimes, and as soon as ever they are capable of taking it into consideration, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*. And the Son of *Syrach* much to the same purpose, speaking of one that in good earnest applies his heart to Wisdom, describes him in this manner, *He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him*; which is the same with the expression in the *Text*, of *remembering our Creator in the days of our Youth*.

Ecclus.

Secondly, To engage young Persons to set about this Work *presently* and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as most are apt to do; *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*: Especially, not to adjourn it to the most unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old Age, *NOW, in the days of thy Youth; when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darken'd, &c.*

And

And how much reason there is to press both these Considerations upon young Persons I shall endeavour to shew in the following Particulars.

First, Because in this Age of our Lives we have the greatest and most sensible obligation to remember God our Creator: *In the days of our Youth*, when the Blessing and Benefit of Life is new, and the memory of it fresh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be so, but we find it true which *Seneca* says, *Nil citius senescit quàm gratia*, *Nothing sooner grows old and out of date than obligation*; and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greatest reason to remember.

In this Age of our Life, when we begin to come to the free use and exercise of our Reason, the first thing we are instructed in, and if we were not taught it we should, though perhaps more slowly, discover and find it out of our selves: I say, the first thing we are instructed in, and inquisitive about, is the *Author* of our Beings, and how we came into the World: And when God first appears to our Minds, and we come by degrees clearly to understand by whose Bounty and Blessing it is that we are and have been preserved thus long, without our own care; principally by the Providence of God, and under Him by those instruments which he hath raised and preserved for that Purpose: When we consider this, we cannot but be strangely surpriz'd both with the Novelty of the Benefit and the Greatness of it.

And when we have well viewed our Selves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them subject to our Dominion and Use: And when we consider seriously in what a noble Rank and Order of Creatures we are placed; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the Earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright shape of Body, and such a Majesty of Countenance as if we were all Kings of the Creation: And which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with Minds and Understandings, with Reason and Speech, whereby we are capable not only of conversing with and benefiting one another, but also of the knowledge and friendship and enjoyment of the Best and most Perfect of Beings, God himself: I say, when we first consider this and meditate seriously upon it, can we possibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which *Elihu* thinks so proper for Man that he wonders it is not in every Man's mouth, *Where is God my Maker, who teacheth me more than the Beasts of the Earth, and maketh me wiser than the Fowls of Heaven?* Job 35. 10, 11.

So that there is a very special obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this Age of our Lives, when we first come to the Knowledge of Him, and when the sense of his Favours is fresh and new to us; and not only so, but when the Blessing of Life is at the very best and in its verdure and flower; when our Health is in its strength and vigour, and the pleasures and enjoyments of Life have their full taste and perfect relish. So *Job* describes the days of his youth, *O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his Candle shined upon my head, and when by his Light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my Youth, &c.* Job 29. 2; 3, 4.

Indeed when the evil days are once come, and thou art enter'd upon the years in which thou thy self hast no pleasure, there might be some sort of pretence then to forget God; because then Life begins to wither and decay, and not only the Gloss and Beauty but even the Comfort and Sweetness of it is gone, and it becomes an insipid and tasteless thing: But thou art inexcusable, O Man, whoever thou art, if thou art unmindful of God in the best Age of thy Life, and when the sense of his Benefits ought upon all accounts to make the strongest and deepest impressions upon thy Mind.

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Secondly,

Secondly, The Reason will be yet stronger to put us upon this, if we consider that notwithstanding the great obligation which lies upon us to *remember our Creator in the days of our Youth*, we are most apt at that time of all other to forget Him. For that which is the great Blessing of Youth is also the great Danger of it, I mean, the Health and Prosperity of it; and though Men have *then* least reason, yet are they most apt to forget God in the height of pleasure and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extremely addicted to Pleasure, because it is most capable and most sensible of it; and where we are most apt to be transported, there we are most apt to transgress. Nothing does so besot the Mind and extinguish in it all sense of Divine things as sensual Pleasures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from Religion and steal away our hearts from God. For *no Man can serve two Masters*; and *the carnal mind is enmity against God*.

Besides that Youth is rash and inconsiderate, because unexperienced; and consequently not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concerns of this temporal Life; much less of that which seems to be at so much a greater distance, and for that reason is so very seldom in our thoughts.

Thirdly, Because this Age is of all other the fittest and best to begin a Religious course of Life. And this does not contradict the former Argument, though it seems to do so. For as it is true of Children, that they are most prone to be idle, and yet fittest to learn: so in the case we are speaking of both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to our selves, to forget God and Religion, and yet at the same time fittest to receive the Impressions of it.

Youth is *ætatis Disciplinæ*, the proper *Age of Discipline*; very obsequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of Impression and imbibe any Tincture: Now we should lay hold of this golden Opportunity. This Age of suppleness, and obedience, and patience for labour, should be plied by Parents, before that rigour and stiffness which grows with Years come on too fast. Childhood and Youth are choice Seasons for the planting of Religion and Vertue, and if Parents and Teachers sleep in this Seed time they are ill Husbandmen; for this is *the time of plowing and sowing*.

This Age is certainly the most proper for Instruction, according to that of the Prophet, *whom shall he teach Knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand Doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast. For precept must be upon precept and line upon line, here a little and there a little.* And the sooner this is done, the better; only things must be instilled into them gently and by degrees.

It is a noted Saying of Aristotle, *That young Persons are not to bear Lectures of Moral Philosophy*; because at that Age Passion is so predominant and unruly: By which, I think he only means that the Minds of young Persons are least prepared to receive the Precepts of Morality and to submit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be used to form the Minds and Manners of Youth to Vertue and Goodness. He certainly understood the nature and power of evil Habits too well to be of that mind; and consequently must think that the Principles of Morality ought with great care and diligence to be instill'd into young persons betimes: Because they of all other have the most need of this kind of Instruction, and this Age is the most proper Season for it: And the less their Minds are prepared for it, so much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and subdue their Passions before they

they grow too stiff and headstrong. So that if the Seeds of Religion and Vertue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old Age? according to that of the Son of Syrach, *If thou hast gathered nothing in thy Youth, how canst thou expect to find any thing in thine Age?* Ecclesiasticus 25. 13.

Young years are tender and easily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any fashion, they are *udum & molle lutum*, like moist and soft clay which is pliable to any form; but soon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impressions upon Age, and to deface the Evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good Instruction hath been neglected at first, a conceited Ignorance doth commonly take possession, and obstruct all the passages through which Knowledge and wisdom should enter into us.

Upon this Consideration the Work of Religion should be begun betimes, because it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is just the same thing for young persons to be enter'd into a Religious course and to have their Minds habituated to Vertue before vicious Customs have got place and strength in us: For whoever shall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and opposition, and must dispute his ground by Inches.

It is good therefore to do that which must be done one time or other, when it is easiest to be done; when we may do it with the greatest advantage, and are likely to meet with the least and weakest opposition. We should anticipate Vice and prevent the Devil and the World by letting God into our hearts betimes and giving Religion the first *seisine* and possession of our Souls. This is the time of sowing our Seed, which must by no means be neglected. For the Soul will not lye fallow; good or evil will come up. If our Minds be not cultivated by Religion, Sin and Vice will get the possession of them: but if our tender years be seasoned with the Knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following course of our Lives.

In a word, this Age of our Lives is proper for Labour and Conflict; because Youth is full of heat, and vigour, of courage, and resolution to enterprize and effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young persons very unfit to advise and direct themselves, and therefore they have need to be advised and directed by those who are wiser and more experienced: But yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at Counsel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickness, of courage and constancy in the way wherein they are set.

Besides, that Youth hath a great sense of Honour and Vertue, of Praise and Commendation, which are of great force to engage young Persons to attempt worthy and excellent things: For hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense of Honour and desire of Praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of Victory and Mastery in any kind; and these are proper and most peculiar to Youth, *I write unto you young Men, saith St. John, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil One.*

And, besides the spirit and vigor of Youth, young persons have several other qualities which makes them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a Learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because Hope is always of the future, and the Life of young Persons is in a great measure before them and yet to come. And, which is a good Bridle

to restrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modest and bashful: And which is also a singular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honest and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great measure free from the *love of Money*, which *Experience*, as well as the *Apostle*, tells us, *is the root of all evil*. Children are very seldom covetous, because they have seldom been bitten by want.

Fourthly, This is the most acceptable Time of all other, because it is the first of our Age. Under the *Law* the *first-fruits* and the *first-born* were God's. In like manner we should devote the *first* of our Age and Time to Him. God is the first and most excellent of Beings, and therefore it is fit that the prime of our Age and the excellency of our Strength should be dedicated to him and his Service.

An early Piety must needs be very acceptable and pleasing to God. Our *Blessed Lord* took great pleasure to see *little Children come unto him*; an *Emblem* of the pleasure he takes that Men should list themselves betimes in his service. *St. John* was the youngest of all the *Disciples*, and our *Saviour* had a very particular kindness and affection for him; for he is said to be *the Disciple whom Jesus loved*.

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our *good Days*, and *the years* which we our selves *have pleasure in*: And that we have a grateful sense of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickest and best returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to Him from whom we have received all.

It is likewise an argument of great Sincerity, which is the Soul of all Religion and Vertue, when a Man devotes himself to God betimes, because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints, nor driven to God by that pressing necessity which lies upon Men in time of *Sickness* and *old Age*. And on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our Age: When our Blood is warm and our Spirits quick, and our parts are at the best, *then* to think our selves too good to serve God; what an affront is this to him who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do?

Besides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of Young Persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that Age. Early Habits of Vertue, like new Cloaths upon a young and comely Body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shap'd Mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is Joy in Heaven at the conversion of a great and old Sinner, so it cannot but be a very delightful Spectacle to God and Angels, and to the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, to see a Young Person, besieged by powerful Temptations on either side, to acquit himself gloriously, and resolutely to hold out against the most violent Assaults: To behold one in the prime and flower of his Age, that is Courted by Pleasures and Honours, by the Devil and all the bewitching vanities of this World, to reject all these and to cleave stedfastly to God: Nay, to frown upon all these Temptations and to look down upon them with Indignation and Scorn, and to say, Let those dote upon these things, who know no better: Let them adore sensual Pleasures and lying Vanities, who are Ignorant of the sincere and solid Pleasures of Religion and Vertue: Let them run into the arms of Temptation who can forget God their *Creator*, their *Preserver*, and *the Guide of their Youth*: As for me, I will serve the Lord, and will imploy my whole time
either

either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to Men who are made after the Image of God. This work shall take up my whole Life, there shall be no void or empty Space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the Devil and his Temptations to enter in: Lord, I will be thine, I have chosen thee for my happiness and *my portion for ever: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. Lo! they that are far from thee shall perish: But it is good for me to draw near to God, to begin and end my Days in his fear and to his Glory.*

Fifthly and Lastly, This Age of our Life may, for any thing we know, be the only Time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God and defer the Business of Religion to old Age, intending, as we pretend, to ~~see~~ about it at that Time, we may be cut off before that Time comes, and *turned into Hell with the People that forget God.*

The Work of Religion is the most necessary of all other, and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon, but we easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal Soul, and put his everlasting Happiness upon the greatest hazard and uncertainty, must make Religion his first Business and Care, must think of God betimes and *remember his Creator in the Days of his Youth.*

I have now done with the *three* things which I proposed to consider from these Words. The *Inferences* from this whole *Discourse* shall be these *two*.

First, To persuade those that are young to *remember God their Creator*, and to engage in the ways of Religion and Vertue betimes.

Secondly, To urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; lest the Opportunity be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy.

First, To persuade those that are young to *remember God their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the ways of Religion and Vertue. Do not suffer your selves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfactions, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of Health and Pleasure soften and dissolve your Spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your Minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is most mindful of you; *when the Candle of the Lord shines about your Tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health, and strength, and sweetness of Life:

No Man knows what he does, and what an invaluable Treasure he prodigally wastes, when he lets slip this golden Season and Opportunity of his Life; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with Sin and Vice, and his Mind is clear of all bad impressions, and, capable of the best; not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider that the ways of Religion and Vertue are nothing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter: And that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from Him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him: That your Lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness that it will be no easie matter to work upon them.

Therefore

Therefore remember your Creator in the Days of your youth : To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin. When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now ? You have a great Work before you which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finish'd at once. Your whole Life is no more than sufficient for it ; to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your Life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it : When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Consider further ; If we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering Devotions of old Age ? Wise Men are wont to forecast and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that Time ; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy Evening : That what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflections upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, and useful and well-spent Life.

But on the other hand, if we have neglected Religion, and forgotten Good days without number ; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious Life, we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our sorrow and anguish against an evil Day ; and have foolishly contrived to make our Burthen then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it ; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for Repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it ; and when we shall be utterly dishearten'd from setting about so vast a Work, of which we can see no end ; and yet have so very little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we shall be forc'd to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signifie but very little either to our present comfort, or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the Day of your prosperity and in the best Age of your Life, and yet when the Day of Affliction and the infirmities of Age come upon you, you would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldest not have Him *cast thee off in thine old Age, and forsake thee when thy strength fails,* do thou remember Him in the Days of thy Youth, in the prime and vigour of thine Age : For *this is the acceptable Time, this is the Day of Salvation.*

Therefore acquaint thy self with him, and remember him NOW ; in the days of thy Youth ; defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment : Begin it just now, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it before the evil days come ; before the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars be darkened, and all the Comforts and Joys of Life be fled and gone :

Be not deceived, O Man, whosoever thou art ; for God is not mocked. He will not be put off by us with the Days in which we our selves have no pleasure. Offer up thy self a living Sacrifice and not a Carcass, if thou wouldest be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the Living God by offering up to him faint Spirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us in giving us the best Blessings of Life, and all things richly to enjoy ; and do we grudge Him the most valuable part of our Lives, and the years which we our selves have Pleasure in ? Do we thus requite the Lord ? foolish people and unwise ! Is the Giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good ? If we offer up the lame in Sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil ? Offer it

it now to thy Governour, and try if he will be pleased with thee and accept thy person. Hath God deserved so ill at our hands, that we should forget and neglect Him? And hath the Devil deserved so well of us, that we should be contented to spend the best part of our Lives in his Service, which is perfect Slavery? Was he our Creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a most malicious design to make us for ever miserable?

Secondly, Let me urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, lest all opportunity of doing it be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy. Resolve to redeem, if it be possible, the Time which you should have improved: you have squander'd away too much already, waste no more of this precious Opportunity of Life: you have deferr'd a necessary Work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude your selves with vain hopes that this work may be done at any time, and in an Instant; and that if you can but fashion your last breath into *Lord have Mercy upon me*, this will prevail with God and make atonement for the long course of a wicked and sinful Life. What strange thoughts have Men of God and Heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of Sin and the great easiness of Repentance, that can impose upon themselves at this rate?

Bethink your selves better in time, *consider and shew your selves men.* What will you do in the day of your distress, who have neglected God in your most flourishing and prosperous condition? What will you say to him in a dying hour, who scarce ever had one serious thought of him all your Life? Can you have the face at that time to bespeak him in this manner? Lord, now the World and my Lusts have left me, and I feel my self ready to sink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy Mercy to deliver my Soul from going down into the Pit. I have heard strange things of thy Goodness and that thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which I always trusted to, that after a long Life of Sin and Vanity thou wouldest at last be pacified with a few penitent words and sighs at the hour of death. Let me not, I pray thee, be disappointed of this hope and put to confusion.

Is this an address fit to be made to a wise Man, Much less to the all-wise and just Judge of the World? and yet this seems to be the plain Interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual Sinner to Almighty God in his last extremity, and when he is just giving up the Ghost and going to appear before his dreadful Tribunal.

I say again, let no Man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes; or with false notions of a slight and sudden Repentance: As if Heaven were an Hospital founded on purpose to receive all sick and maimed Persons, that when they can live no longer to the Lusts of the flesh and the sinful pleasures of this World can but put up a cold and formal Petition to be admitted there.

No, no, as sure as God is true, they shall never see the Kingdom of God, who instead of seeking it in the first place make it their last Refuge and Retreat: And when they find themselves under the Sentence of Death and Damnation, only to avoid present Execution, and since there is no other remedy, do at last bethink themselves of getting to *Heaven*, and fall upon their Knees to petition the *Great Judge of the World* that they may be transported thither.

Can any Man in reason expect that such a Petition will be granted? I tell you Nay; but except you repent sooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better Fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the Salvation of Men, he will not prostitute Heaven, and set the Gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good earnest,

earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to Hell. They have no value for Heaven, because they are in no wise fit for it, but yet they think Hell to be the worse Place of the two.

The ever Blessed God is himself abundantly sufficient for his own Happiness, and does not need our Company to make any addition to it: Nor yet is Heaven so desolate a Place, or so utterly void of Inhabitants, that like some newly discovered *Plantation* it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the scum and refuse of Mankind. There are an innumerable Company of Glorious Angels, much nobler Creatures than the best of Men, to people those blessed Regions. *Thousands of Thousands* continually standing before God, and *ten Thousand times ten Thousands* minister unto Him.

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy, but he hath no need of us to help him to be so. God indeed is so good, as to desire our Happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own: But he is Happy in and from himself, and without him it is impossible we should be Happy, nay, we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To conclude; if we would have God to accept us in a dying Hour, and our *B. Saviour* to remember us now he is in his Kingdom, let us think of him betimes, and acquaint our selves with him that we may be at Peace: NOW; before the evil days come, and the Tears draw nigh when we shall say, we have no pleasure in them.

O that men were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end. Which God of his infinite Goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart, in this our Day, and may learn betimes so to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts to wisdom, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the H. Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THE
RULE
OF
FAITH.

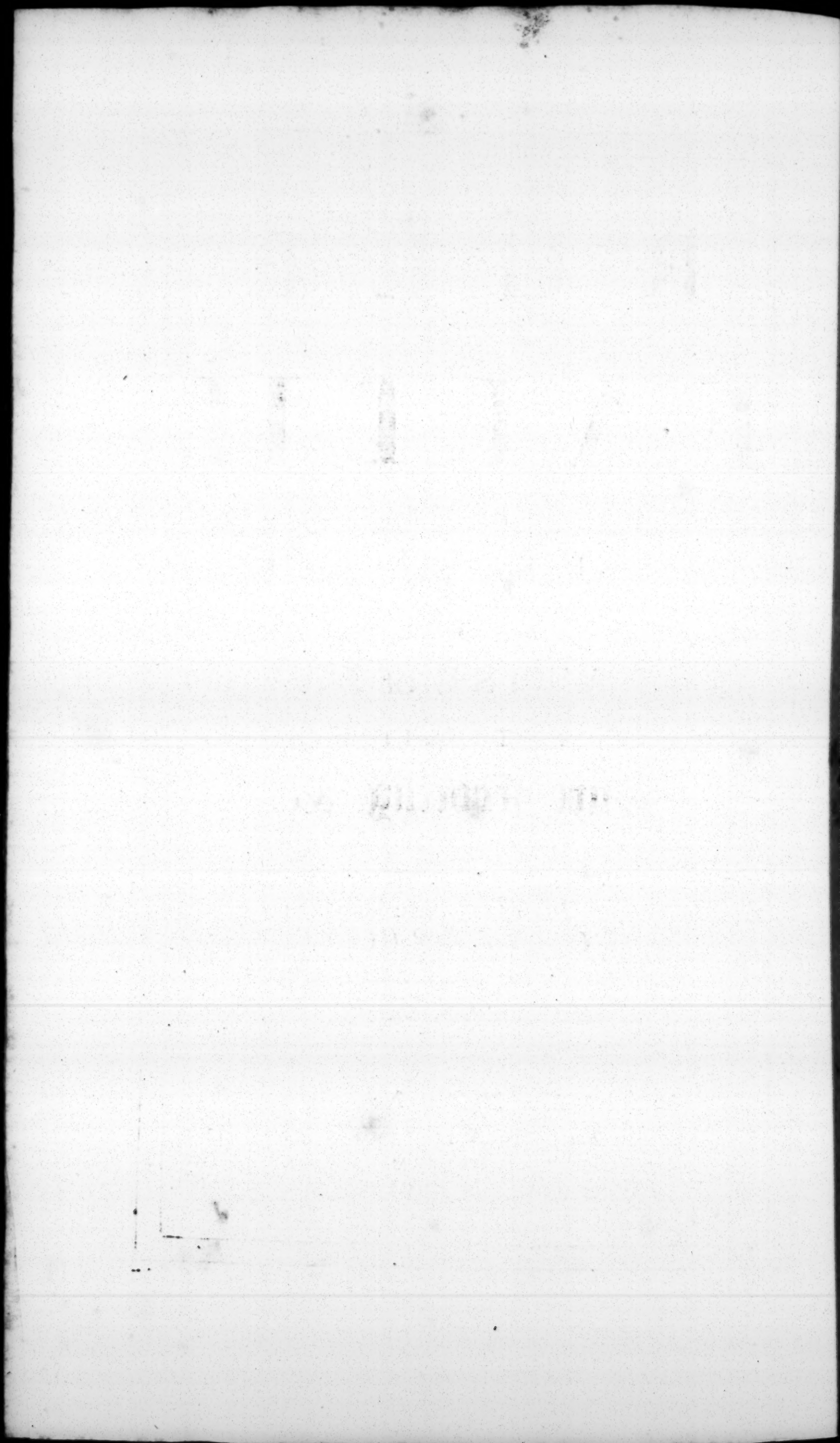
OR, AN
ANSWER
TO THE
TREATISE of Mr. I. S.
ENTITLED
Sure-Footing, &c.

By His Grace JOHN, late Lord Archbishop
of CANTERBURY.

The Ninth Edition, Corrected.

L O N D O N:

Printed by *Sam. Buckley*, For WILLIAM ROGERS, TIMOTHY GOODWIN, and BENJAMIN TOOKE, in *Fleet-street*; and for JOHN NICHOLSON in *Little-Britain*.
MDCCX.



T O M Y

Honoured and Learned Friend

Dr. Stillingfleet.

S I R,

I Have, with a great deal of Pleasure and Satisfaction, read over your Book, which I find in every Part answerable to its Title, viz. A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion. And now I thank you for it, not only as a private Favour, but a publick Benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a Discourse entitled Sure-footing in Christianity. And although I have no small Prejudice against Books with conceited Titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain Animadversions on some Passages in your Book, which I had so lately read over. Upon Perusal of which Animadversions, I found that the Author of them had attack'd (and in his own Opinion confuted) a Page or Two in your Book. This drew me on to take a View of his main Discourses: Which, because they are in great Vogue among some of his own Party, and do with an unusual kind of Confidence and Ostentation pretend to the newest and most exact Fashion of writing Controversy, as being all along demonstrative and built upon self-evident Principles; Therefore I resolv'd thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover (if

O o o o 2 I could)

I could) upon what so firm and solid Foundations this High and Mighty Confidence was built.

But before I had enter'd upon this Undertaking, I met with a Letter from the Author of Sure-footing to his Answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his Answer. In which Letter, though there be many Things liable to great Exception, yet because I am unwilling to be diverted from the main Question, I shall not argue with him about any of those Matters; only take Leave to use the same Liberty in managing my Answer, which he hath assumed to himself in prescribing Laws to me about it: Therefore, without taking any further Notice of his Letter, I address my self to his Book.

T H E

THE
R U L E
O F
F A I T H.

P A R T I.

The Explication and State of the Question.

S E C T. I.

§. 1. **T**H E Question he propounds to himself to debate, is, *What is the Rule of Faith?* In order to the Resolution whereof, he endeavours, The Explication of the Terms of the Question.

First, To fix the true Notion of these Two Terms, *Rule* and *Faith*: Which Way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable, but I can by no Means think his Explication of those Terms to be sufficient: He tells us, That a *Rule* is that which is able to regulate or guide him that useth it: In which Description, as in many other Passages of his Book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. * *Whitby*, * P. 180: that is, the confounding of a *Rule* and a *Guide*, by making *Regulating* and *Guiding* to be equivalent Words. But for this I am no further concerned than to take Notice of it by the Way: The Fault which I find in this *Definition*, is, That it doth not make the Thing plainer than it was before; so that no Man is the wiser for it, nor one Jot nearer knowing what a *Rule* is. He pretends to tell *English-men* what a *Rule* is, and for their clearer understanding of this *Word*, he explains it by a *Word* less remov'd from the *Latin*, *A Rule* is that which is able to regulate him that useth it; just as if a Man should go about to explain what a *Law-giver* is, by saying, *He is one that hath the Power of Legislation*. Of the Two he had much better have said, That a *Rule* is a *Thing* that is able to rule him that useth it, though this be nothing but an Explication of the same *Word* by it self.

§. 2. Not much better is his Explication of the Term *Faith*, which he tells us, *in the common Sense of Mankind, is the same with Believing*. * He * P. 4. declar'd indeed before-hand, That he did not intend to give rigorous *School-Definitions* of either this or the former *Word*; and (to do him Right) he hath not in the least swerv'd from his Intention. It were to be wish'd he had prefac'd some such Thing to his *Demonstrations*, for the Reader will find that they are not a whit more rigorous than his *Definitions*; the Latter of which doth very much resemble the Country-man's Way of defining, who being ask'd by his Neighbour what an *Invasion* was, after some Study

* P. 159.

told him very gravely, That an *Invasion* was as if he should say an *Invasion*: In like manner Mr. S. tells us, That *Faith* (or, which is all one, *Belief*) is the same with *Believing*; which, in my Apprehension, is but a Country Definition, unless the interposing of those solemn Words [*In the common Sense of Mankind*] may be thought to mend the Matter. This puts me in Mind of what Mr. S. says in his * *Transition* (as he calls it) where he gives the Reader an Account what Feats he hath done in his Book: *He will see* (says he) *I take my Rise at the Meaning of the Words Rule and Faith; thus known, I establish my First Principles in this present Matter to be these, viz. a Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith.* This is the right self-evident Method he talks so much of, and his Principles agree admirably well with his Definitions. If he had but proceeded in the same Method, and added, That a *Rule of Faith* is a *Rule of Faith*, that *Oral Tradition* is *Oral Tradition*; and that to say *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, is as much as to say *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, the whole Business had been concluded without any more ado, and I think no Body would have gone about to confute him.

§. 3. Rejecting then his Way of Definition as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a Man a clearer Notion of Things; I shall endeavour to explain a little better (if I can) the Meaning of these Terms.

A *Rule* (when we speak of a *Rule of Faith*) is a Metaphorical Word, which in its first and proper Sense, being applied to *material* and *sensible* Things, is the *Measure* according to which we judge of the Straightness and Crookedness of Things; and from hence it is transferr'd by Analogy to Things *Moral* or *Intellectual*. A *Moral Rule* is the *Measure* according to which we judge whether a Thing be *Good* or *Evil*; and this kind of Rule, is that which is commonly called a *Law*, and the Agreement or Disagreement of our Actions to this Rule, is suitably to the Metaphor, called *Rectitude* or *Obliquity*. An *Intellectual Rule*, is the *Measure* according to which we judge whether a Thing be *True* or *False*; and this is either *General* or more *Particular*. Common Notions, and the acknowledged Principles of Reason, are that *General Rule*, according to which we judge whether a Thing be *True* or *False*. The Particular Principles of every Science, are the more *particular Rules*, according to which we judge whether Things in that Science be *True* or *False*. So that the *General* Notion of a *Rule* is, That it is a *Measure*, by the Agreement or Disagreement to which, we judge of all Things of that Kind to which it belongs.

§. 4. *Faith*, though both among sacred and prophane Writers it be used many times more generally, for a Perswasion or Assent of the Mind to any Thing wrought in us by any kind of Argument; yet, as it is a Term of Art used by *Divines*, it signifies that particular kind of Assent which is wrought in us by *Testimony* or *Authority*: So that *Divine Faith*, which we are now speaking of, is an Assent to a Thing upon the Testimony or Authority of God; or, which is all one, an Assent to a Truth upon *Divine Revelation*.

§. 5. A *Rule of Faith*, is the *Measure* according to which we judge what Matters we are to assent to, as reveal'd to us by God, and what not. And more particularly, the *Rule of Christian Faith*, is the *Measure*, according to which we are to judge what we ought to assent to, as the Doctrine reveal'd by *Christ* to the World, and what not.

§. 6. So that this Question, *What is the Rule of Christian Faith?* supposeth a Doctrine revealed by *Christ* to the World; and that That Doctrine was intelligibly and intirely delivered by *Christ* to his Apostles, and sufficient Confirmation given to it; that this Doctrine was in the same Manner published to the World by the Apostles, who likewise gave sufficient

cient Evidence of the Truth of it. All this is necessarily supposed in the Question: For it would be in vain to enquire whether this or that be the Rule of Christian Faith, if such a Thing as the Christian Faith were not first supposed. When therefore we enquire what is the Rule of Christian Faith? the Meaning of that Enquiry is, by what Way and Means the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the Distance of so many Ages from the Time of its first Delivery: For this being known, we have the *Rule of Faith*; that is, a Measure by which we may judge what we are to assent to, as the Doctrine of Christ, and what not. So that when any Question ariseth about any particular Proposition, whether this be Part of Christ's Doctrine, we may be able by this *Rule* to resolve it.

S E C T. II.

§. 1. **T**HE next Thing to be considered, is his Resolution of this Question; by which we shall know what his Opinion is concerning the *Rule of Faith*; for that being known, the Controversy between us will easily be stated. Mr. J's Rule of Faith.

His Opinion in general is, that *Oral or Practical Tradition* (in Opposition to *Writing*, or any other Way that can be assigned) is the *Rule of Faith*. By *Oral or Practical Tradition*, he means, † a Delivery down from Hand to Hand (by Words, and a constant Course of frequent and visible Actions, conformable to those Words) of the Sense and Faith of Forefathers. † P. 41.

§. 2. Now, that I may bring the Controversy between us to a clear State, I am first to take a more particular View of his Opinion concerning the *Rule of Faith*, that so I may the better understand how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and what to the Scriptures or written Tradition: And then I am to lay down the Protestant *Rule of Faith*, that so it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The Sum of what he attributes to Oral Tradition, so far as can be collected out of so obscure and confused a Discourse, may be reduced to these Five Heads.

§. 3. *First*, That the Doctrine of Christian Religion was delivered by Christ to the Apostles, and by them published to the World; and that the Age which first received it from the Apostles, delivered it as they received it without any Change or Corruption to their Children, and they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this Way of Oral Tradition. This is the Sum of his Explication of Tradition, *Disc. 5th.*

§. 4. *Secondly*, That this Way alone is not only sufficient to convey this Doctrine down to all Ages certainly, and without any Alteration; but it is the only possible Way that can be imagined of conveying down a Doctrine securely from one Age to another. And this is the natural Result of his Discourse about the Properties of a *Rule of Faith*: For if the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* do belong to Oral Tradition, then it is a sufficient Means; and if those Properties do solely and essentially appertain to it, and are incompatible to any Thing else (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impossible there should be any other Way.

§. 5. *Thirdly*, That it is impossible this Means should fail or miss of its End; that is, the Doctrine of Christ being once put into this Way of Conveyance, it can neither cease to descend, nor be at any Time corrupted or changed in its Descent. This is that which his *Demonstrations* pretend to prove.

§. 6. *Fourthly*, That the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, or the Impossibility

bility of its failing, is a first and self-evident Principle. This he frequently asserts throughout his Book.

§. 7. *Fifthly*, That this Way of Oral Tradition hath *de facto* in all Ages been acknowledged by Christians, as the only Way and Means whereby the Doctrine of Christianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the *Consent of Authority*.

* P. 117.

† P. 337.

* Append.
4th. P. 319.
† P. 68.

§. 8. As for the Scriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by Men divinely inspired, and to contain a Divine Doctrine, even the same which is delivered by Oral Tradition; so he tells us, * *'Tis certain the Apostles taught the same Doctrine they writ*: But then he denies it to be of any Use without Oral Tradition, because neither the *Letter* nor *Sense* of it can without That be ascertain'd: So he saith in his Letter to Dr. Casaubon, † *As for the Scriptures (ascertaining their Letter and Sense, which is done by Tradition) 'tis clear they are of incomparable Value, not only for the Divine Doctrine contained in them, but also for many particular Passages, whose Source or first Attestation not being universal, nor their Nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their Conveyance down by Tradition*. Where, though he give the Scriptures very good Words, it is to be understood, provided they will be subordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their Sense and their being intelligible and useful to Oral Tradition: For if any Man shall presume to say, that this Book hath any certain Sense without Oral Tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this Book which he hath endited is so written, and doth not depend upon Tradition for its Sense and Interpretation; then the most scurrilous Language is not bad enough for the Scriptures: Then what are those Sacred Writings, * *but Ink variously figured in a Book, † unsens'd Characters, waxen-natur'd Words, not yet sens'd, nor having any certain Interpreter, but fit to be plaid upon diversly by Quirks of Wit? that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing*. These, with many other disgraceful Terms, he very liberally bestows upon the Divine Oracles; the Consideration whereof, did it not minister too much Horror, would afford some Comfort; for by this kind of rude Usage, so familiar with him towards his Adversaries, one may reasonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the Scriptures among his Friends.

† P. 116.

§. 9. And whereas he saith, *That the Scriptures have preserv'd many particular Passages, which, because their Source or first Attestation was not universal, nor their Nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their Conveyance down by Tradition*; this is impossible, according to his *Hypothesis*: For if neither the Scriptures Letter, nor the certain Sense of it as to the main Body of Christian Doctrine, could have been secured without Oral Tradition; that is, if we could not have known that those Passages which contain the main Points of Christ's Doctrine, either had been written by Men divinely inspir'd, or what the Sense of them was, but from the Consonancy and Agreement of those Passages with the Doctrine which was orally preached by the Apostles; how can we be certain either of the Letter or Sense of other particular Passages which must necessarily want this Confirmation from Oral Tradition, because *their first Attestation was not universal, nor their Nature much practical*? Nay, his Discourse plainly implies, that we can have no Security at all, either of the Letter or Sense of any other Parts of Scripture, but only those which are coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine, as is evident from these Words, † *Tradition established, the Church is provided of a certain and infallible Rule to preserve a Copy of the Scriptures Letter truly significative of Christ's Sense, as far as it is coinci-*

coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine preached at first; because Sense writ in Mens Hearts by Tradition; can easily guide them to correct the Alteration of the outward Letter. This I perceive plainly is the Thing they would be at; they would correct the outward Letter of Scripture by Sense written in the Hearts; and then, instead of leaving out the Second Commandment, they would change it into a Precept of giving due Worship to Images, according to the Council of Trent; and a Thousand other Alterations they must make in the Bible, to make it truly significative of the Sense of their Church. But surely the outward Letter of other Passages of Scripture, which were not intended to signify Points of Faith, is equally liable to Alterations; and yet the Church is not by Tradition provided of any Way to correct these Alterations when they happen; because Tradition doth, as this Corollary implies, only furnish the Church with a certain and infallible Rule of preserving a Copy of the Scriptures Letter, so far as it is coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine.

§. 10. Again he tells us, † Tradition established, the Church is provided of † P. 117. a certain and infallible Rule to interpret Scripture Letter by, so as to arrive certainly at Christ's Sense, as far as the Letter concerns the Body of Christian Doctrine preached at first, or Points requisite to Salvation. So that whatever he may attribute to Scripture for Fashion's Sake, and to avoid Calumny with the Vulgar, as he says very ingenuously in his Explication of the 15th Corollary; nevertheless 'tis plain, that according to his own Hypothesis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That 'tis altogether useless according to his Hypothesis, is plain; for the main Body of Christian Doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of Confirmation to it, because it receives all its Confirmation from it; only the Church is ever and anon put to a great deal of Trouble to correct the Alteration of the outward Letter, by Tradition and Sense written in their Hearts. And as for all other Parts of Scripture which are not coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine, we can have no Certainty either that the outward Letter is true, nor, if we could, can we possibly arrive at any certain Sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his Hypothesis, is plain, because † every silly † P. 40. and upstart Heresy fathers it self upon it; and when Men leave Tradition (as he supposeth all Hereticks do) the Scripture is the most dangerous Engine that could have been invented, being to such Persons only † waxen-natur'd Words, not sensed, nor having any certain Interpreter, but fit † P. 68. to be play'd upon diversly by Quirks of Wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing. And indeed, if his Hypothesis were true, the Scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous Language which he useth against them; and † Mr. White's Comparison of them with Lilly's Almanack, would not only be pardonable but proper; and (unless he † Apology for Tradition, P. 165. added it out of Prudence, and for the Peoples Sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those Books) he might have spared that cold Excuse which he makes for using this Similitude, that it was agreeable rather to the Impertinency of the Objection than the Dignity of the Subject, Certain it is, if these Men are true to their own Principles, that notwithstanding the high Reverence and Esteem pretended to be born by them and their Church to the Scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the Way; and even look upon it as a great Oversight of the Divine Providence to trouble his Church with a Book, which, if their Discourse be of any Consequence, can stand Catholicks in no Stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a Weapon in the Hands of Hereticks.

P P P P

SECT.

S E C T. III.

The Prote-
stant Doc-
trine con-
cerning the
Rule of Faith.

§. 1. **H**AVING thus taken a View of his Opinion, and considered how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and how little to the Scriptures; before I assail his *Hypothesis*, I shall lay down the Protestant *Rule of Faith*; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his Book, but that he may have no Colour of Objection that I proceed altogether in the destructive Way, and overthrow his *Principle*, as he calls it, without substituting another in its Room. The Opinion then of the Protestants concerning the *Rule of Faith*, is this in general, That those Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, are the Means whereby the Christian Doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly understand this, together with the Grounds of it (which in Reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us) I shall declare it more particularly in these following Propositions.

§. 2. *First*, That the Doctrine of Christian Religion was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them first preached to the World, and afterwards by them committed to Writing; which Writings, or Books, have been transmitted from one Age to another down to us: So far I take to be granted by our present Adversaries. That the Christian Doctrine was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them publish'd to the World, is Part of their own *Hypothesis*: That this Doctrine was afterwards by the Apostles committed to Writing, he also grants, *Corol. 29.* † *'Tis certain the Apostles taught the same Doctrine they writ*; and if so, it must be as certain that they writ the same Doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general Tenet of the Papists, that the Scriptures do not contain the entire Body of Christian Doctrine; but that besides the Doctrines contained in Scripture, there are also others brought down to us by oral or unwritten Tradition. But Mr. S. who supposeth the whole Doctrine of Christian Religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by Oral Tradition, doth not any-where, that I remember, deny that all the same Doctrine is contained in the Scriptures; only he denies the Scriptures to be a Means sufficient to convey this Doctrine to us with Certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assur'd what is Christ's Doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that Passage I last cited to grant this, in saying that the Apostles did both teach and write the same Doctrine. I am sure Mr. *White* (whom he follows very closely throughout his whole Book) does not deny this in his *Apology for Tradition*, † where he saith, That it is not the *Catholick Position*, that all its Doctrines are not contained in the Scriptures. And that those Writings or Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable Matter of Fact, and granted universally by the Papists, as to all those Books which are owned by Protestants for Canonical.

§. 3. *Secondly*, That the Way of Writing is a sufficient Means to convey a Doctrine to the Knowledge of those who live in Times very remote from the Age of its first Delivery. According to his *Hypothesis*, there is no possible Way of conveying a Doctrine with Certainty and Security besides that of Oral Tradition; the Falshood of which will sufficiently appear, when I shall have shewn, that the true Properties of a Rule of Faith do agree to the Scriptures, and not to Oral Tradition. In the mean Time I shall only offer this to his Consideration, that whatever can be orally

† P. 117.

† P. 171.

orally delivered in plain and intelligible Words, may be written in the same Words; and that a Writing or Book which is publick, and in every ones Hand, may be conveyed down with at least as much Certainty and Security, and with as little Danger of Alteration, as an Oral Tradition. And if so, I understand not what can render it impossible for a Book to convey down a Doctrine to the Knowledge of After-ages. Besides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended some little Inconvenience in making that an essential Part of his *Hypothesis*, which is contradicted by plain and constant Experience: For that any kind of Doctrine may be sufficiently convey'd, by Books, to the Knowledge of After-ages, provided those Books be but written intelligibly, and preserved from Change and Corruption in the Conveyance (both which I shall be so bold as to suppose possible) is as little doubted by the Generality of Mankind as that there are Books. And surely we Christians cannot think it impossible to convey a Doctrine to Posterity by Books, when we consider that God himself pitched upon this Way for Conveyance of the Doctrine of the Jewish Religion to After-ages; because it is not likely that so wise an Agent should pitch upon a Means whereby it was impossible he should attain his End.

§. 4. *Thirdly*, That the Books of Scripture are sufficiently plain, as to all Things necessary to be believed and practised. He that denies this, ought in reason to instance in some necessary Point of Faith, or Matter of Practice, which is not in some Place of Scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a sufficient Objection to say, † That the greatest Wits † P. 38, 39. among the Protestants differ about the Sense of those Texts, wherein the Generality of them suppose the Divinity of Christ to be plainly and clearly expressed; because, if nothing were to be accounted sufficiently plain, but what it is impossible a great Wit should be able to wrest to any other Sense, not only the Scriptures, but all other Books, and (which is worst of all to him that makes this Objection) all Oral Tradition would fall into Uncertainty. Doth the Traditionary Church pretend that the Doctrine of Christ's Divinity is conveyed down to her by Oral Tradition more plainly than it is expressed in Scripture? I would fain know what plainer Words she ever used to express this Point of Faith by, than what the Scripture useth, which expressly calls him *God, the true God, God over all, blessed for evermore*. If it be said, that those who deny the Divinity of Christ have been able to evade these and all other Texts of Scripture, but they could never elude the Definitions of the Church in that Matter; it is easily answered, that the same Arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no Reason why they should trouble themselves so much about the Latter; for why should they be solicitous to wrest the Definitions of *Councils*, and conform them to their own Opinion, who had no Regard to the Church's Authority? If those *great Wits* (as he calls them) had believed the Sayings of Scripture to be of no greater Authority than the Definitions of Councils, they would have answered Texts of Scripture, as they have done the Definitions of Councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another Sense, but by downright denying their Authority. So that it seems that *Oral Tradition* is liable to the same Inconvenience with the *Written*, as to this Particular.

§. 5. And of this I shall give him a plain Instance in Two *great Wits* of their Church, the *present Pope* and *Mr. White*; the one the *Head* of the *Traditionary Church*, as Mr. S. calls it; the other the *great Master* of the *Traditionary Doctrine*. These Two *great Wits*, the *Pope* and *Mr. White*,

notwithstanding the Plainness of Oral Tradition, and the Impossibility of being ignorant of it, or mistaking it, have yet been so unhappy as to differ about several Points of Faith; inasmuch that Mr. *White* is unkindly censured for it at *Rome*, and perhaps here in *England* the Pope speeds no better; however, the Difference continues still so wide, that Mr. *White* hath thought fit to disobey the Summons of his chief Pastor, and like a prudent Man, rather to write against him here out of Harms-way, than to venture the Infallibility of plain Oral Tradition for the Doctrines he maintains, against a Practical Tradition which they have at *Rome* of killing Hereticks.

† P. 54.

Methinks Mr. S. might have spared his Brags, that he hath evinced from clear Reason, † that it is far more impossible to make a Man not to be, than not to know what is rivetted into his Soul by so oft repeated Sensations, (as the Christian Faith is by Oral and Practical Tradition); and that it exceeds all the Power of Nature (abstracting from the Cases of Madness and violent Disease) to blot Knowledge, thus fix'd, out of the Soul of one single Believer; inasmuch, that sooner may all Mankind perish, than the regulative Virtue of Tradition miscarry; nay, sooner may the Sinews of entire Nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her Activity and Motion, that is, her self; than one single Part of that innumerable Multitude which integrate the vast Testification, which we call Tradition, can possibly be violated; when after he hath told us,

† P. 116.

† that the City of *Rome* was blest with more vigorous Causes to imprint Christ's Doctrine at first, and recommend it to the next Age, than were found any-where else; and consequently, that the Stream of Tradition, in its Source and first putting into Motion, was more particularly vigorous there than in any other See; and that the chief Pastor of that See hath a particular Title to Infallibility built upon Tradition, above any other Pastor whatsoever; not to dilate on the particular Assistances to that Bishop, springing out of his divinely constituted Office: When, I say, after all this quaint Reason and rumbling Rhetorick about the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, and the particular Infallibility of the Bishop of *Rome* built on Tradition, we cannot but remember that this great Oracle of Oral Tradition the Pope, and this great Master of it Mr. *White*, who is so peculiarly skill'd in the Rule of Faith, have so manifestly declar'd themselves to differ in Points of Faith. For that the Pope, and his Congregation General at *Rome*, have condemn'd all his Books for this Reason, because † they contain several Propositions manifestly heretical, is a Sign that these Two great Wits do not very well hit it in Matters of Faith; and either that they do not both agree in the same Rule of Faith, or that one of them does not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says concerning the Use of Scripture, be upon this Account justly apply'd to the Business of Oral Tradition? † If we see Two such eminent Wits among the Papists (the Pope and Mr. *White*) making use of the self-same, and as they conceive, the best Advantages their Rule of Faith gives them; and availing themselves the best they can by acquired Skills, yet differ about Matters of Faith; what Certainty can we undertakingly promise to weaker Heads, that is, to the Generality of the Papists, in whom the Governors of the Church do professedly cherish Ignorance for the increasing of their Devotion?

† Mr. Wh. Extasis, P. 9.

† P. 39.

§. 6. Fourthly, We have sufficient Assurance that the Books of Scripture are conveyed down to us without any material Corruption or Alteration. And he that denies this, must either reject the Authority of all Books, because we cannot be certain whether they be the same now that they were

were at first ; or else, give some probable Reason why these should be more liable to Corruption than others. But any Man that considers Things, will easily find, that it is much more improbable that these Books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any Thing material to Faith or a good Life, than any other Books in the World ; whether we consider the peculiar Providence of God engaged for the Preservation of them, or the peculiar Circumstances of these Books. If they were written by Men divinely inspired, and are of use to Christians, as is acknowledged (at least in Words) on all Hands ; nothing is more credible, than that the same Divine Providence which took Care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And if we consider the peculiar Circumstances of these Books, we shall find it morally impossible that they should have been materially corrupted, because being of universal and mighty Concernment, and at first diffused into many Hands, and soon after translated into most Languages, and most Passages in them cited in Books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all Matters of Importance, we have as great Assurance as can be had concerning any Thing of this Nature that they have not suffered any material Alteration, and far greater than any Man can have concerning the Incorruption of their Oral Tradition, as I shall shew when I come to answer the Thing which he calls Demonstration.

§. 7. *Fifthly*, That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Christians, in former Ages, to be the Means whereby the Doctrine of Christ hath with greatest Certainty been convey'd to them. One good Evidence of this is, That the primitive Adversaries of Christian Religion did always look upon the Scripture as the Standard and Measure of the Christian Doctrine, and in all their writing against Christianity, took that for granted to be the Christian Faith which was contained in those Books ; there having not as yet any Philosopher risen up who had demonstrated to the World, that a Doctrine could not, with sufficient Certainty and Clearness, be conveyed by Writing from one Age to another. But how absurd had this Method of confuting Christian Religion been, if it had been then the publick Profession of Christians that the Scriptures were not the Rule of their Faith ? How easy had it been for the Fathers, who apologized for, and defended Christian Religion, to have told them they took a wrong Measure of their Doctrine ; for it was not the Principle of Christians, that their Faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond Undertaking to attack their Religion that Way ; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to enquire what that Doctrine was which was orally delivered from Father to Son, without which the Scriptures could signify no more to them than an unknown Cypher without a Key ; being of themselves, without the Light of Oral Tradition, only an Heap of unintelligible Words, *unsensed Characters*, and *Ink variously figured in a Book* ; and therefore it was a gross Mistake in them to think they could understand the Christian Religion (like their own Philosophy) by reading of those Books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the Fathers might have defended their Religion ; nay, they ought in all Reason to have taken this Course, and to have appealed from those dead senseless Books to the *true Rule of Faith, the living Voice of the Church Essential*. But doth Mr. S. find any Thing to this Purpose in the *Apologies* of the Fathers ? If he hath discover'd any such Matter, he might do well to acquaint the World with it, and make them wiser ; in the mean Time I shall inform him what I have found, that

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that the Fathers never except against that Method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous Reports and Misrepresentations which were made of their Doctrine, to the Books of Scripture, as the true Standard of it.

§. 8. Another *Evidence* that Christians in all Ages since the Apostles Times have owned the Scriptures for the *Rule* of their *Faith*, is, That the *Fathers*, in their *Homilies*, did use constantly to declare to the People what they were to believe, and what they were to practise out of the Scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed not the Scriptures but something else to have been the Rule of Faith and Manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the People from Mr. S's supposed *Rule of Faith, Oral Tradition*, than to make a daily Practice of declaring and confirming the Doctrines of the Christian Faith from the Scriptures? Had the ancient Fathers been right for Mr. S's Way, they would not have built their Doctrine upon Scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the People an Occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a Book, but rather (as their more prudent Posterity have done) would have lock'd it up from the People in an unknown Tongue, and have set open the Stores of good wholesome Traditions, and instead of telling them (as they do most frequently) *thus saith the Scripture*, would only have told them, this is *the Voice of the Essential Church*, *thus it hath been delivered down by Hand to us from our Forefathers*.

§. 9. I might add for a *Third Evidence*, the great Malice of the Enemies and Persecutors of Christianity against this Book, and their cruel Endeavours to extort it out of the Hands of Christians, and destroy it out of the World, that by this Means they might extirpate Christianity; for it seems they thought that the abolishing of this Book would have been the Ruine of that Religion. But (according to Mr. S's Opinion) their Malice wanted Wit; for had all the Bibles in the World been burn'd, Christian Religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserv'd, and safely transmitted down to us by *Sense written in Mens Hearts*, with the good Help of Mr. S's Demonstrations. Nay, their Church would have been a great Gainer by it; for this Occasion and Parent of all Heresy the *Scripture* being once out of the Way, she might have had all in her own Hands, and by leading the People in the safe Paths of Tradition, and consequently of Science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well, but suppose the Persecutors of Christianity mistook themselves in their Design, how came the Christians in those Days to be so tenacious of this Book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to Torments and Death? And why did they look upon those who out of Fear delivered up their Books, as Apostates and Renouncers of Christianity? And if they had not thought this Book to be the great Instrument of their Faith and Salvation, and if it had really been of no greater Consideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it; why should they be so loth to part with a few *unsens'd Characters, waxen-natur'd Words, to be play'd upon diversly by Quirks of Wit*, that is, *apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing*? Why should they value their Lives at so cheap a Rate as to throw them away for a few insignificant Scrawls, and to shed their Blood for a *little Ink variously figured in a Book*? Did they not know, that the Safety of Christianity did not depend upon this Book? Did no Christian then understand that, which (according to Mr. S.) no Christian can be ignorant of, *viz.* that not the Scripture, but *unmistakable and indefectible Oral Tradition* was the *Rule of Faith*? Why did they not consider, that though this *Letter Rule* of Hereticks had been consum'd to Ashes, yet their *Faith* would

would have lain safe, and been preserved entire in its † *Spiritual Causes*, † P. 34: *Mens Minds, the noblest Pieces in Nature?* Some of them indeed did deliver up their Books, and were call'd *Traditores*, and I have some Ground to believe that these were the only *Traditionary Christians* of that Time, and that the rest were Confessors and Martyrs for the *Letter Rule*. And if this be not Evidence enough, that the Scriptures have always been acknowledged by Christians for the Rule of Faith, I shall, when I come to examine his Testimonies for Tradition (with the good Leave of his *Distinction* between *Speculators* and *Testifiers*) prove by most exprefs Testimony, that it was the general Opinion of the Fathers, *that the Scriptures are the Rule of Christian Faith*; and then, if his *Demonstration* of the Infallibility of Tradition will enforce, that as *Testifiers* they must needs have spoken otherwise, who can help it?

S E C T. IV.

§. 1. **H**AVING thus laid down the *Protestant Rule of Faith*, with the Grounds of it, all that now remains for me to do towards the clear and full stating of the Controversy between us, is to take Notice briefly, and with due Limitations,

How much
Protestants
allow to Oral
Tradition.

First, How much the Protestants do allow to Oral Tradition.

Secondly, What those Things are which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his *Rule of Faith*, which we see no Cause to attribute to ours: And when this is done, any one may easily discern how far we differ.

§. 2. *First*, How much Protestants do allow to Oral Tradition.

1. We grant that Oral Tradition, in some Circumstances, may be a sufficient Way of conveying a Doctrine; but withal we deny, that such Circumstances are now in Being. In the first Ages of the World, when the *Credenda* or *Articles* of Religion, and the *Agenda* or *Precepts* of it were but few; and such as had the Evidence of natural Light; when the World was contracted into a few Families in Comparison, and the Age of Man ordinarily extended to Six or Seven Hundred Years; it is easy to imagine how such a Doctrine in such Circumstances, might have been propagated by Oral Tradition, without any great Change or Alterations. *Adam* lived till *Methuselah* was above Two Hundred Years old, *Methuselah* lived till *Sem* was near an Hundred, and *Sem* out-liv'd *Abraham*: So that this Tradition need not pass through more than Two Hands betwixt *Adam* and *Abraham*. But though this Way was sufficient to have preserved Religion in the World, if Men had not been wanting themselves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: For through the Corruption and Negligence of Men after the Flood (if not before) when the World began to multiply, and the Age of Man was shorten'd, the Knowledge and Worship of the one true God was generally lost in the World. And so far as appears by Scripture History (the only Record we have of those Times) when God called out *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, the whole World was lapsed into Polytheism and Idolatry. Therefore, for the greater Security of Religion, afterwards, when the Posterity of *Abraham* was multiplied into a great Nation, the Wisdom of God did not think fit to entrust the Doctrine of Religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain Way of Tradition, but committed it to Writing. Now that God pitched upon this Way, after the World had sadly experienc'd the Unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good Evidence that this was the better and more secure Way; it being the usual Method of the Divine Dispensations not to go back-

backwards, but to move towards Perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the Apostle's * reasoning concerning the Two Covenants, is very applicable to these Two Methods of conveying the Doctrine of Religion; *if the First had been faultless, then should no Place have been sought for a Second.*

§. 3. So likewise, when Christ revealed his Doctrine to the World, it was not in his Life-time committed to Writing, because it was entertained but by a few, who were his Disciples and Followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living Oracle to teach them. After his Death, the Apostles, who were to publish this Doctrine to the World, were assisted by an infallible Spirit, so as they were secured from Error and Mistake in the Delivery of it. But when this extraordinary Assistance failed, there was need of some other Means to convey it to Posterity, that so it might be a fix'd and standing Rule of Faith and Manners to the End of the World. To this End the Providence of God took Care to have it committed to Writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a Conjecture of Protestants, but the Sense of former Times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom (Homil. 1. in Matth.) who tells us, *That Christ left nothing in writing to his Apostles, but instead thereof did promise to bestow upon them the Grace of his Holy Spirit, saying, John 14. He shall bring all Things to your Remembrance, &c. But because in Progress of Time there were many grievous Miscarriages both in Matter of Opinion, and also of Life and Manners; therefore it was requisite that the Memory of this Doctrine should be preserved by Writing.* So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the Way of Oral Tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then from the Nature of the Thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural Assistance which accompanied the Deliverers.

§. 4. And therefore it is no good Way of Argument against the Way of Tradition by Writing, which he lays so much Weight upon, * *That the Apostles and their Successors went not with Books in their Hands to preach and deliver Christ's Doctrine, but Words in their Mouths; and that primitive Antiquity learned their Faith by another Method, a long Time before many of those Books were universally spread among the Vulgar.* For what if there was no need of writing this Doctrine, whilst those living Oracles the Apostles were present with the Church? Doth it therefore follow that there was no Need of it afterwards when the Apostles were dead, and that extraordinary and supernatural Assistance was ceased? If the Preachers now-a-days could give us any such Assurance, and confirm all they preach by such frequent, and publick, and unquestionable Miracles as the Apostles did; then we need not examine the Doctrines they taught by any other Rule, but ought to regulate our Belief by what they delivered to us: But seeing this is not the Case, That ought in all Reason to be the Rule of our Faith, which hath brought down to us the Doctrine of Christ with the greatest Certainty; and this I shall prove the Scriptures to have done.

§. 5. So that in those Circumstances I have mentioned, *We* allow Oral Tradition to have been a sufficient Way of conveying a Doctrine; but now considering the great Increase of Mankind, and the Shortness of Man's Life in these latter Ages of the World, and the long Tract of Time from the Apostles Age down to us, and the innumerable Accidents whereby, in the Space of 1500 Years, Oral Tradition might receive insensible Alterations, so as at last to become quite another Thing from what it was at first, by

by passing through many Hands; in which Passage all the Mistakes and Corruptions which (in the several Ages through which it was transmitted) did happen, either through Ignorance, or Forgetfulness, or out of Interest and Design, are necessarily derived into the Last: So that the farther it goes, the more Alteration it is liable to; because as it passeth along, more Errors and Corruptions are infused into it. I say, considering all this, we deny, that the Doctrine of Christian Religion could, with any probable Security and Certainty, have been conveyed down to us by the Way of Oral Tradition; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God fore-seeing this, did in his Wisdom so order Things, that those Persons who were assisted by an infallible Spirit in the Delivery of this Doctrine, should, before they left the World, commit it to Writing; which was accordingly done: And by this Instrument the Doctrine of Faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§. 6. *Secondly*, We allow, that Tradition *Oral* and *Written*, do give us sufficient Assurance that the Books of Scripture which we now have, are the very Books which were written by the Apostles and Evangelists: Nay farther, that *Oral* Tradition alone is a competent Evidence in this Case; but withal we deny, That Oral Tradition is therefore to be accounted the *Rule of Faith*.

The general Assurance that we have concerning Books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose Names they bear, is a constant and uncontroll'd Tradition of this, transmitted from one Age to another, partly orally, and partly by the Testimony of other Books. Thus much is common to Scripture with other Books. But then the Scriptures have this peculiar Advantage above other Books, that being of a greater and more universal Concernment, they have been more common and in every bodies Hands, more read and studied than any other Books in the World whatsoever; and consequently, they have a more universal and better grounded Attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all Ages by Christians (except Three or Four Books of them, which for some Time were questioned by some Churches, but have since been generally received); but the greatest Enemies of our Religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the Antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very Books which the Apostles writ. And this is as great an Assurance as we can have concerning any ancient Book, without a particular and immediate Revelation.

§. 7. And this Concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make Oral Tradition to be finally the *Rule of Faith*; for the Meaning of this Question (*What is the Rule of Faith?*) is, What is the next and immediate Means whereby the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although Oral Tradition be the Means whereby we come to know that these are the Books of Scripture, yet these Books are the next and immediate Means whereby we come to know what is Christ's Doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§. 8. Nor doth this Concession make Oral Tradition to be the *Rule of Faith*, by a Parity of Reason; as if because we acknowledge that Oral Tradition alone can with competent Certainty transmit a Book to After-ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much Certainty convey a Doctrine consisting of several Articles of Faith (nay very many, as Mr. White acknowledges*) and many Laws and Precepts of Life: So

* Rushw. Di.
al. 4. Sect. 9.

† P. 23.

and That the Statute-Book, in which are contain'd *those Laws which it concerns every Man to be skilful in*; therefore, by like Parity of Reason, it must follow, that Tradition it self is better than a Book, even *the best Way imaginable to convey down such Laws to us*. Mr. S. saith † expressly it is; but how truly, I appeal to Experience, and the Wisdom of all Law-givers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defin'd to us, *a Delivery down from Hand to Hand of the Sense and Faith of Forefathers, i. e. of the Gospel, or Message of Christ*. Now, suppose any Oral Message, consisting of an Hundred Particularities, were to be delivered to an Hundred several Persons of different Degrees of Understanding and Memory, by them to be conveyed to an Hundred more, who are to convey it to others, and so onwards to a Hundred Descents; Is it probable this Message, with all the Particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many Mouths, as if it were written down in so many Letters, concerning which every Bearer should need to say no more than this, That it was delivered to him as a Letter written by him whose Name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the Mens Lives were concerned every one for the faithful Delivery of his Errand or Letter: For the Letter is a Message which no Man can mistake in, unless he will; but the Errand so difficult, and perplexed with its Multitude of Particulars, that it is an equal Wager against every one of the Messengers, that he either forgets, or mistakes something in it; it is Ten Thousand to One, that the first Hundred do not all agree in it; it is a Million to One, that the next Succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the first Hundred mistook or forgot any Thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes, the greater Change it is liable to. Yet after all this, I do not say but it may be demonstrated, in Mr. S's Way, to have more of Certainty in it than the Original Letter.

§. 9. *Thirdly*, We allow, That the Doctrine of Christian Religion hath in all Ages been preached to the People by the Pastors of the Church, and taught by Christian Parents to their Children; but with great Difference, by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with less Care and Exactness, according to the different Degrees of Ability and Integrity in Pastors or Parents; and likewise with very different Success, according to the different Capacities and Dispositions of the Learners. We allow likewise, That there hath been a constant Course of visible Actions, conformable, in some Measure, to the Principles of Christianity; but then we say, that those outward Acts and Circumstances of Religion may have undergone great Variations, and received great Change, by Addition to them, and Defalcation from them in several Ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his Demonstrations. Now, that several of the main Doctrines of Faith contained in the Scripture, and Actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by Christians in all Ages (as the Articles summed up in the Apostles Creed, the Use of the Two Sacraments) is a good Evidence so far, that the Scriptures contain the Doctrine of Christian Religion. But then, if we consider how we come to know that such Points of Faith have been taught, and such external Actions practised in all Ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present Multitude of Christians that profess to have received such Doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the Inconsequence of which Argument I shall have a better Occasion to shew

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shew afterwards: But he that will prove this to any Man's Satisfaction, must make it evident from the best Monuments and Records of several Ages, that is, from the most authentick Books of those Times, that such Doctrines have in all those Ages been constantly and universally taught and practised. But then if from those Records of former Times it appear that other Doctrines, not contained in the Scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all Ages, but have crept in by Degrees, some in one Age, and some in another, according as Ignorance and Superstition in the People, Ambition and Interest in the chief Pastors of the Church, have ministred Occasion and Opportunity; and that the Innovators of these Doctrines and Practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of Scripture as the acknowledged *Rule of Faith*; and have likewise acknowledged the Books of Scripture to have descended without any material Corruption or Alteration (all which will sufficiently appear in the Process of my Discourse); then cannot the Oral and Practical Tradition of the present Church, concerning any Doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real Foundation in Scripture, be any Argument against these Books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Christian Doctrine. And to say the Scripture is to be interpreted by Oral and Practical Tradition, is no more reasonable than it would be to interpret the ancient Books of the Law, by the present Practice of it; which every one, that compares Things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of Deviations from the ancient Law.

S E C T. V.

§. 1. *2dly*, **H**OW much more he attributes to his Rule of Faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours.

1. We do not say, that it is impossible, in the Nature of the Thing, that this Rule should fail, that is, either that these Books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no Need we should. We believe the Providence of God will take Care of them, and secure them from being either lost or materially corrupted; yet we think it very possible that all the Books in the World may be burn'd or otherwise destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our Rule of Faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient (if Men be not wanting to themselves) to convey the Christian Doctrine to all successive Ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of Christian Religion in the World.

§. 2. *Secondly*, Nor do we say, that That Certainty and Assurance which we have, that these Books are the same that were written by the Apostles, is a *first and self-evident Principle*; but only that it is a Truth capable of Evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a Thing of that Nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say that Tradition's Certainty is a first and self-evident Principle; but then he that says this, should take Heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. *Aristotle* was so wise as never to demonstrate first Principles, for which he gives this very good Reason, because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent Men are of Opinion, that a self-evident Principle, of all Things in the World should not be demonstrated, because it needs not: For to what Purpose should a Man write a Book to prove that which every Man must assent to, without any Proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always

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taken a self-evident Principle to be such a Proposition, as having in it self sufficient Evidence of its own Truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing else. If I be herein mistaken, I desire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§. 3. So that the true State of the Controversy between us, is, Whether *Oral and Practical Tradition*, in Opposition to *Writing and Books*, be the only Way and Means whereby the Doctrine of Christ can with Certainty and Security be conveyed down to us, who live at this Distance from the Age of Christ and his Apostles: This *He* affirms, and the *Protestants* deny, not only that it is the sole Means, but that it is sufficient for the certain Conveyance of this Doctrine; and withal affirm, That this Doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the Books of Holy Scripture, as the proper Measure and Standard of our Religion: But then they do not exclude Oral Tradition from being one Means of conveying to us the certain Knowledge of these Books; nor do they exclude the authentick Records of former Ages, nor the constant teaching and Practice of this Doctrine, from being subordinate Means and Helps of conveying it from one Age to another; nay, so far are they from excluding these concurrent Means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great Advantage for the propagating and explaining of this Doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred Oracles, the Holy Scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that Doctrine which Christ delivered to his Apostles, and they preached to the World. To illustrate this by an Instance: Suppose there were a Controversy now on foot, how Men might come to know what was the true *Art of Logick* which *Aristotle* taught his *Scholars*; and some should be of Opinion, that the only Way to know this would be by Oral Tradition from his Scholars; which we might easily understand by consulting those of the present Age, who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from *Aristotle* himself: But others should think it the surest Way to study his *Organon*, a Book acknowledged by all his Scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that Doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter Course, suppose the Authority of Oral Tradition for the conveying to them the Knowledge of this Book; and do suppose this Doctrine to have been taught and practised in all Ages, and a great many Books to have been written by way of Comment and Explication of this Doctrine; and that these have been good Helps of promoting the Knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of Opinion that the truest Measure and Standard of *Aristotle's* Doctrine is his own Book; and that it would be a fond Thing in any Man, by forcing an Interpretation upon his Book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious Sense of his Words, to go about to reconcile this Book with that Method of disputing which is used by the professed *Aristotelians* of the present Age, and with all that Scholastick *Jargon* which Mr. S. learned at *Lisbon*, and has made him so great a Man in the Science of Controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate *first* and self-evident Principles, a Trick not to be learned out of *Aristotle's Organon*. The Application is so easy that I need not make it.

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P A R T II.

*Concerning the Properties of the Rule of Faith;
and whether they agree solely to Oral Tradition.*

S E C T. I.

§. 1. **H**AVING thus endeavoured to bring the Controversy between us to its clear and true State, that so we might not quarrel in the Dark, and dispute about we know not what; I come now to grapple more closely with his Book. And the main Foundations of his Discourse may be reduced to these Three Heads:

First, That the essential Properties of such a Way and Means as can with Certainty and Security convey down to us the Doctrine of Christ, belong solely to Oral Tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his *Five* first Discourses.

Secondly, That it is impossible that this Way of Oral Tradition should fail. And this he pretends to prove in his *Four* last Discourses.

Thirdly, That Oral Tradition hath been generally reputed by Christians in all Ages, the sole Way and Means of conveying down to them the Doctrine of Christ. And this he attempts to shew in his last Chapter, which he calls, *The Consent of Authority to the Substance of his foregoing Discourses*. If he make good these Three Things, he hath acquitted himself well in his Undertaking; but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§. 2. *First*, Whether the essential Properties of such a Way and Means, as can with Certainty and Security convey down to us the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrine, belong solely to Oral Tradition?

The true Way to measure the essential Properties of this or that Means, is by considering its Sufficiency for its End: For whatsoever is necessary to make any Means sufficient for the obtaining of its End, is to be reputed an essential Property of that Means, and nothing else. Now, because
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the End we are speaking of, is the Conveyance of the Knowledge of Christ's Doctrine to all those who are concerned to know it, in such a Manner as they may be sufficiently certain and secure that it hath received no Change or Corruption from what it was when it was first delivered. From hence it appears, that the Means to this End must have these Two Properties: 1. It must be sufficiently plain and intelligible. 2dly, It must be sufficiently certain to us, *that is*, such as we may be fully satisfied concerning it that it hath received no Corruption or Alteration. If it have these Two Conditions, it is sufficient for its End; but if it want either of them, it must necessarily fall short of its End: For if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this Doctrine to our Knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be assured, that That Doctrine which it brings down to us for the Doctrine of Christ, is really such;

§. 3. I know he assigns more Properties of this Means, which he calls *the Rule of Faith*; but upon Examination it will appear, that they either fall in with these Two, or do not at all belong to it: As,

† P. 11. *First*, That † it must be plain and self-evident to all, as to its Existence. Nothing can be more frivolous than to make this a Property of any Thing; because whosoever enquires into the Properties of a Thing, is supposed to be already satisfied that the Thing is.

† P. 11.
† P. 3. *Secondly*, That it be † evidenceable, as to its ruling Power; that is, as he explains himself, † that Men be capable of knowing, that it deserves to be relied on as a Rule. By which he must either understand the Certainty of it; and then it falls in with the Second Property I mentioned, and is the same with the Sixth which he lays down; or else he means more generally, that it is the Property of a Rule, that Men be capable of knowing that it hath the Properties of a Rule: For I understand not how a Man can know that any Thing deserves to be relied on as a Rule, otherwise than by knowing it hath the Properties of a Rule, *that is*, that it is sufficient for its End. But at this Rate a Man may multiply the Properties of Things without End, if the Evidence of a Thing, as to its Existence, be one Property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a Thing, be another.

† P. 12. §. 4. *Thirdly*, That it be † apt to settle and justify undoubting Persons. What he means here by *settling undoubting Persons*, I am not able, on the sudden, to comprehend, because I understand not what unsettles a Man besides doubting; for if a Man be but so well satisfied about any Thing as to have no Doubt concerning it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be settled better, *that is*, how his Mind can be more at rest than not to doubt. But if by *undoubting Persons* he means those who do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by *apt to settle undoubting Persons*, viz. *apt to settle Persons when they do doubt, that is*, when they are not undoubting Persons. As for *justifying undoubting Persons*, if he means that whosoever securely relies on this Rule ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly consequent upon the Two Properties I have laid down: For if the Means of conveying Christ's Doctrine be sufficiently plain and certain, every Man that relies upon it is justified in so doing, because he trusts a Means which is sufficient for its End.

† P. 12. §. 5. *Fourthly*, That † it be apt to satisfy fully the most sceptical Dissenters and rational Doubters. For its Aptitude to satisfy rational Doubters, that plainly follows from the sufficient Certainty of it; but why it should be a necessary Property of a Rule of Faith, to be apt to satisfy the most sceptical

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tical Dissenter, I can no more divine, than I can, why he should call a *Dissenter Sceptical*, which are repugnant Terms: For a Sceptick is one who neither assents to any Thing, nor dissents; but is in a perpetual Suspense, because he looks upon every Opinion as balanced by a contrary Opinion of equal Probability, without any Inclination of the Scales either Way. But if by the *most Sceptical Dissenter* he means only a Sceptick, one that doth not believe the Doctrine of Christ, nor any thing else; then I would fain know what that is which in Reason is apt fully to satisfy such a Person. If any Thing will, sure a Demonstration will; but there is no Aptitude at all in a Demonstration, to satisfy him who doubts whether there be any such Thing as a Demonstration, and likewise questions the Certainty of all those Principles from whence any Conclusion can be demonstrated. And those who are *most Sceptical*, profess to doubt of all this.

§. 6. *Fifthly*, That it † be apt to convince the most obstinate and acute † P. 11, 12. Adversary. If the Rule be plain and certain, the most acute Adversary may be convinced by it if he will, *that is*, if he be not obstinate; but if he be obstinate, *that is*, such a one as will not be convinced, but will persist in his Error in Despite of all Evidence that can be offered him, then I must profess that I do not know any kind of Evidence that is apt to convince that Man who will not be convinced by any Reason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any Rule of Faith, though never so self-evident, he might have learned from the same Author, in whom he may find his chief Properties of the Rule of Faith, if he had but had the Patience to have considered his Explication of them; I mean Dr. Holden, * who lays down the Second Property of the Rule of Faith (or, as he calls it, the Means whereby we come to the Knowledge of revealed Truth) in these Words, Another (*viz.* Condition of this Means, &c.) is, That it be apt of its own Nature to afford the greatest true and rational Certainty, to all Men without Exception, to whom the Knowledge of it shall come; provided they be furnish'd with the Faculty of Reason, and have their Minds purified from all Passion and Lust, which do (as he tells us, Cap. 6.) often hinder the most sagacious Persons from understanding the most evident and manifest Truths. Now I suppose Obstinacy to be the Effect of Passion and Lust. ^{* Analyf. Fid. 1. 1. c. 3.}

If Mr. S. mean, that the Rule of Faith must be apt to conquer Obstinacy, and make Men lay it aside, I cannot understand this neither; unless he mean that the Rule of Faith must be a Cudgel, which the Traditionary Church have been good at, and may use it again when Occasion serves; for none but they have a Title to it upon a Church Account, as Mr. S. tells us, Corol. 10. But setting aside this, I do not know any Thing else that is apt to conquer Obstinacy: Not the clearest Reason, or the strongest Demonstration, for that I am sure is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreasonable Humour with any Probability of Success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make Trial, he may easily be convinc'd by Experience how unapt obstinate Persons are to be convinc'd by Reason. I do not know any Thing that ever carried greater Evidence than the Doctrine of Christ, preached by himself and his Apostles to the obstinate Jews, and confirmed by Multitudes of unquestionable Miracles; and yet we do not find by the Success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no Man can judge of the Aptitude of a Means to an End, otherwise than by the usual and frequent Success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the Doctrine of the Gospel was ever intended for that Purpose. God hath provided no Remedy for the wilful

wilful and perverse, but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn: And such a Disposition supposeth a Man to have laid aside both *Scepticism* and *Obstinacy*.

* P. 12.

§. 7. *Sixthly*, That * it be *certain in it self*.

† P. 12.

Seventhly, That † it be *absolutely ascertainable to us*.

These Two are comprehended in the Second Property I laid down; so that I have nothing to say against them, but that the Last looks very like a Contradiction, *absolutely ascertainable to us*; which is to say, *with respect to us*, *without respect to us*; for *absolutely* seems to exclude *Respect*, and to *us* implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the Seven *Properties* he mentions, are either coincident with those Two I have laid down, or consequent upon them, or absurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true *Properties* of a *Rule of Faith* are those Two which I first named, and no more.

S E C T. II.

That the Properties of a Rule of Faith belong to Scripture.

§. 1. **L**ET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these *Properties* agree solely to Oral Tradition: He tells us there are but *Two Pretenders* to this Title of being the *Rule of Faith*, *Scripture* and *Oral Tradition*; these *Properties* do not belong to *Scripture*, and they do to *Oral Tradition*, therefore solely to it. A very good Argument, if he can prove these Two Things, *That these Two Properties do not belong to Scripture, and that they do to Oral Tradition*.

* P. 12.

§. 2. In order to the proving of the *First*, that these *Properties* do not belong to *Scripture*, he premiseth this Note, * *That we cannot by the Scriptures mean the Sense of them, but the Book, that is, such or such Characters not yet sensed or interpreted*. But why can we not, by the *Scriptures*, mean the *Sense* of them? He gives this clear and admirable Reason, Because the *Sense* of the *Scripture*, is, *the Things to be known, and these we confess are the very Points of Faith, of which the Rule of Faith is to ascertain us*. Which is just as if a Man should reason thus: Those who say the *Statute-Book* can convey to them the Knowledge of the *Statute-Law*, cannot by the *Statute-Book* mean the *Sense* of it, but the *Book*; that is, *such or such Characters not yet sensed or interpreted*; because the *Sense* of the *Statute-Book* is the *Thing to be known*, and these are the very *Laws*, the Knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this *Book*: Which is to say, that a *Book* cannot convey to a Man the Knowledge of any Matter, because if it did, it would convey to him the *Thing to be known*. But that he may farther see what excellent Reasoning this is, I shall apply this Paragraph to *Oral Tradition*, for the Argument holds every whit as well concerning that: *To speak to them in their own Language, who say that Oral Tradition is their Rule, we must premise this Note, that they cannot mean by Oral Tradition the Sense of it, that is the Things to be known; for those, they confess, are the very Points of Faith, of which the Rule of Faith is to ascertain us: When they say then that Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith, they can only mean by Oral Tradition the Words wherein it is delivered, not yet sensed or interpreted, but as yet to be sensed; that is, such or such Sounds, with their Aptness to signify to them assuredly God's Mind, or ascertain them of their Faith; for abstracting from the Sense and actual Signification of those Words, there is nothing imaginable left but those Sounds, with their Aptness to signify it.* When he hath answered

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answered this Argument, he will have answered his own. In the mean while this Discourse, that he who holds the Scriptures to be the Rule of Faith, must needs by the Scriptures mean a Book void of Sense, &c. Because otherwise if by Scripture he should understand a Book that hath a certain Sense in it, that Sense must be the Doctrine of Christ, which is the very Thing that this Book is to convey to us; I say, this Discourse tends only to prove it an absurd Thing for any Man, that holds Scripture the Means of conveying Christ's Doctrine, to understand by the Scripture a Book that conveys Christ's Doctrine. This being his own Reason, put into plain English, I leave the Reader to judge whether it be not something short of *perfect Science and Demonstration*. Nay, if it were thoroughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall short of that low Pitch of Science which he speaks of in his *Preface*, where he tells us, That *the Way of Science is to proceed from one Piece of Sense to another*.

§. 3. Having premised this, that by the Scriptures we must mean only dead Characters that have no Sense under them, he proceeds to shew that these dead Characters have not the Properties of a Rule of Faith belonging to them. Which although it be nothing to the Purpose when he hath shewn it, yet it is very pleasant to observe by what crofs and untoward Arguments he goes about it: Of which I will give the Reader a Taste by One or Two Instances.

In the first Place he shews, that it cannot be evident to us that *these Books were written by Men divinely inspired*, because * *all the seeming Contradictions in those Books are solved, which to do, is one of the most difficult Tasks in the World, they cannot be concluded to be of God's enditing*. Now how is this an Argument against those, who by the Scriptures must mean unsensed Letters and Characters? I had always thought Contradictions had been in the *Sense* of Words, not in the *Letters* and *Characters*; but I perceive he hath a peculiar Opinion, that the Four and Twenty Letters do contradict one another. P. 14.

The other Instance shall be in his last Argument, * *which is this, that the Scripture cannot be the Rule of Faith, because those who are to be ruled and guided by the Scriptures Letter to Faith, cannot be certain of the true Sense of it; which is to say, that unsensed Letters and Characters cannot be the Rule of Faith, because the Rule of Faith must have a certain Sense, that is, must not be unsensed Letters and Characters; which, in plain English amounts to thus much, unsensed Letters and Characters cannot be the Rule of Faith, that they cannot*. P. 17.

§. 4. And thus I might trace him through all his Properties of the *Rule of Faith*, and let the Reader see how incomparably he demonstrates the Falshood of this Protestant Tenet (as he calls it) that a senseless Book may be a *Rule of Faith*. But I am weary of pursuing him in these airy and phantastical Combats, and shall leave him to fight with his own Fancies, and batter down the Castles which himself hath built. Only I think fit here to acquaint him, once for all, with a great Secret of the Protestant Doctrine, which it seems he hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am still more confirmed in my Opinion, that he forlook our Religion before he understood it) that when they say the Scriptures are the *Rule of Faith*, or the Means whereby Christ's Doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the Scriptures Books written in such Words, as do sufficiently express the Sense and Meaning of Christ's Doctrine.

§. 5. And to satisfy him that we are not absurd and unreasonable in supposing the Scriptures to be such a Book, I would beg the Favour of him to grant me these Four Things, or shew Reason to the contrary.

First, That whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible Words, and such as have a certain Sense, may be written in the same Words.

Secondly, That the same Words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are spoken.

Thirdly, That God, if he please, can endite a Book in as plain Words as any of his Creatures.

Fourthly, That we have no Reason to think that God affects Obscurity, and envies that Men should understand him in those Things which are necessary for them to know, and which must have been written to no Purpose if we cannot understand them. St. Luke † tells *Theophilus*, that he wrote the History of Christ to him, on Purpose to give him a *certain Knowledge* of those Things which he writ. But how a Book which hath no *certain Sense*, should give a Man *certain Knowledge* of Things, is beyond my Capacity. St. John † saith, that he purposely committed several of Christ's Miracles to writing, that Men might believe on *Him*. But now, had Mr. S. been at his Elbow, he would have advised him to spare his Labour, and would have given him this good Reason for it; because when he had written his Book, no Body would be able to find the certain Sense of it without Oral Tradition, and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the Doctrine of Christ, and the certain Knowledge of those Miracles which he wrought for the Confirmation of it. If these Four Things be but granted, I see not why, when we say that the Scriptures are the Means of conveying to us Christ's Doctrine, we may not be allow'd to understand by the Scriptures, a Book which doth in plain and intelligible Words express to us this Doctrine.

S E C T. III.

Mr. S's Exceptions against Scripture examined.

§. 1. **A**ND now, although this might have been a sufficient Answer to his Exceptions against the Scriptures, as being incapable of the Properties of a *Rule of Faith*; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by Protestants, *viz.* That the Scriptures are only an Heap of dead Letters and insignificant Characters, without any Sense under them; and that Oral Tradition is that only which gives them Life and Sense; Yet, because several of his Exceptions pretend to shew, that the true Properties of a Rule of Faith do not at all appertain to the Scriptures; therefore I shall give particular Answers to them, and, as I go along, shew that Tradition is liable to all or most of those Exceptions, and to far greater than those.

† P. 13.

§. 2. Whereas he says, † it cannot be evident to Protestants, from their Principles, that the Books of Scripture were originally written by Men divinely inspired; I will shew him that it may, and then answer the Reasons of this Exception.

It is evident, from an universal, constant, and uncontrolled Tradition among Christians, not only oral, but written, and from the Acknowledgment of the greatest Adversaries of our Religion, that these Books were originally written by the Apostles and Evangelists. And this is not only a Protestant Principle, but the Principle of all Mankind, *That an undoubted Tradition is sufficient Evidence of the Antiquity and Author of a Book*

Book, and all the extrinsecal Argument that can ordinarily be had of a Book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the Apostles were Men divinely inspired, *that is*, secured from Errour and Mistake in the writing of this Doctrine, from the Miracles that were wrought for the Confirmation of it; because it is unreasonable to imagine, that the Divine Power should so remarkably interpose for the Confirmation of a Doctrine, and give so eminent an Attestation to the Apostles to convince the World that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by God, and yet not secure them from Errour in the Delivery of it. And that such Miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible Histories as we have for any of those Things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better Evidence that the Apostles were Men divinely inspired, than bare Oral Tradition can furnish us withal: For setting aside the authentick Relation of these Matters in Books, it is most probable, that Oral Tradition of it self, and without Books, would scarce have preserved the Memory of any of those particular Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles which are recorded in Scripture. And for the Probability of this, I offer these Two Things to his Consideration.

First, No Man can deny that memorable Persons have lived, and Actions been done in the World innumerable, whereof no History now extant makes any Mention.

Secondly, He himself will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more Miracles than are recorded in Scripture. And now I challenge him to shew the single Virtue of Oral Tradition, by giving an Account of any of those Persons, or their Actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 Years ago, besides those which are mentioned in Books; or to give a Catalogue but of Ten of those innumerable Miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangelists, with Circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal: If he can do this, it will be a good Evidence that Oral Tradition singly, and by it self, can do something; but if he cannot, 'tis as plain an Evidence on the contrary, that if those Actions of former Times, and those Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles which are recorded in Books, had never been written, but entrusted solely to Oral Tradition, we should have heard as little of them at this Day, as we do of those that were not written.

§. 3. Now to examine his Reasons for this Exception:

First, He saith, † *Tis most manifest* that this cannot be made evident † P. 13: to the *Vulgar*, that Scripture was written by Men divinely inspired. This Reason is as easily answered, by saying *'tis most manifest that it can*: But besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the *Vulgar*, as other Things which they do most firmly, and upon good Grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the *Vulgar*, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good Grounds that there was such a King as *William the Conqueror*; and the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles are capable of as good Evidence as we have for this.

Secondly, He says, † this cannot be evident to the *curious and most speculative Searchers*, but by so deep an Inspection into the Sense of Scripture, as shall discover such Secrets, that Philosophy and humane Industry could never have arrived to. As if we could not be assured that any Thing were written by Men divinely inspired, unless it were above the Reach of humane Understanding; and as if no Man could know that this was our Saviour's Doctrine, *Whatever ye would that Men should do unto you, that do ye likewise unto them,*

them, because every one can understand it. But if there were more Mysteries in the Scriptures than there are, I hope a Man might be satisfied that they were written by Men divinely inspired, without a clear Comprehension of all those Mysteries. The Evidence of the Inspiration of any Person, doth not depend upon the Plainness or Sublimity of the Things revealed to him, but upon the Goodness of the Arguments which tend to persuade us that the Person is so inspired; and the Argument that is most fit to satisfy us of that, is, if he work Miracles. Now I would gladly know why a learned Man cannot be assured of a Miracle, *that is*, a plain sensible Matter of Fact done long ago, but *by so deep an Inspection into the Sense of Scripture, as shall discover such Secrets that Philosophy and humane Industry could never have arrived to.*

† P. 14.

§. 4. Thirdly, Because † *all the seeming Contradictions of Scripture must be solved, before we can out of the bare Letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's enditing; to solve which literally, plainly and satisfactorily (he tells us) the Memory of so many Particulars, which made them clearer to those of the Age in which they were written, and the Matter known, must needs be so worn out by Tract of Time, that it is one of the most difficult Tasks in the World.* As if we could not believe a Book to be of God's enditing, because there seem now to be some Contradictions in it, which we have Reason to believe could easily have been solved by those who lived in the Age in which it was written. Or as if Oral Tradition could help a Man to solve these Contradictions, when the Memory of Particulars necessary for the clear Solution of them, is (as himself confesses) worn out by Tract of Time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the Solution of the seeming Contradictions of Scripture, *demonstrate*, that Oral Tradition hath to this Day preserved the Memory of those Particulars (necessary for that Purpose) the Memory of which must needs be long since worn out by Tract of Time, then I will readily yield, that his Rule of Faith hath in this Particular the Advantage of *ours*. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an Argument against *our* Rule, which is as strong against *his own*? This is just like Captain Everard's Friend's Way of arguing against the *Protestants*, That they cannot rely upon Scripture, because it is full of plain Contradictions impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all Reason to submit to the Infallibility of the Church. And for an Instance of such a Contradiction, he pitched upon the Three *fourteen Generations* mentioned in the First of St. *Matthew*; because the Third Series of Generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but Thirteen. Not to mention now, how this Difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied both by Protestant and Popish Commentators, without any Recourse to *Oral Tradition*; that which I take Notice of, is, the Unreasonableness of making this an Exception against the Protestants, when it comes with every whit as much Force upon themselves. Suppose this Contradiction not capable of any Solution by Protestants (as he affirms) and I should submit to the Infallibility of the Church; can he assure me that Infallibility can make Thirteen, Fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer Satisfaction in this Point, by acknowledging the Infallibility of the Church? The Case is the very same as to Mr. S's Exception; if I owned Oral Tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming Contradictions of Scripture, and consequently I could not in Reason conclude it to be of God's enditing. So that in Truth, these Exceptions, if they were true, would not strike at Protestantism, but at Christian Religion; which is the general Unhappiness of most of the Popish Arguments; than which there is no greater Evidence, that the Church of Rome is not the true

true Mother, because she had rather Christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other Church hath a Claim to it. It was a Work very proper for the Heretick *Marcion* to assault Religion this Way; who, as *Iertullian* † tells us, writ a whole Book, which he call'd *Antitheses*, wherein he reckoned up all the Contradictions (as he thought) between the Old and New Testament: But methinks it is very improper for the Papists, who pretend to be the only true Christians in the World, to strain their Wits to discover as many Contradictions as they can in the Scripture, and to prove that there is no Way of reconciling them; the natural Consequence of which is, the exposing of this *sacred Instrument of our Religion*, and even *Christianity* it self, to the Scorn of Atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and Captain *Everard*, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief Fruits of their Conversion is to abuse the Bible.

† L. 1. contr. Marcion.

§. 5. Secondly, He says, † that Protestants cannot know *how many* the † P. 14. Books of Scripture *ought to be*, and *which of the many controverted ones may be securely put in that Catalogue, which not*. This he proves by saying, 'Tis most palpable, that few, or at least the rude *Vulgar*, can never be assured of it. And if this be a good Argument, this again is a good Answer, to say it is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted Books, concerning which, it cannot be shewn there was ever any Controversy; and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that Question hath been made: And if those which have been controverted have been since received by those Churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther Doubt concerning them, because the Controversy about them is at an end. And now I would fain know what greater Certainty Oral Tradition can give us of the true Catalogue of the Books of Scripture: For it must either acknowledge some Books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a Supposition of controverted Books? If Oral Tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted, nor consequently, that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those Churches who did once raise a Controversy about them, have been since satisfied that they are Canonical. The Traditionary Church now receives the *Epistle to the Hebrews* as Canonical. I ask, Do they receive it as ever delivered for such? That they must, if they receive it from Oral Tradition, which conveys Things to them under this Notion, as ever delivered; and yet *St. Hierom* speaking (not as a *Speculator*, but a *Testifier*) saith expressly of it, † *That the Custom of the Latin Church doth not receive it among the Canonical Scriptures*. What saith Mr. S. to this? † Com. in Esai. c. 6. §. 8. It is clear from this Testimony, that the *Roman Church*, in *St. Hierom's* Time, did not acknowledge this *Epistle* for Canonical; and 'tis as plain that the present *Roman Church* doth receive it for Canonical. Where is then the *Infallibility of Oral Tradition*? How does the *living Voice of the present Church* assure us, that what Books are now received by her were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the Matter must come to be tried by the best Records of former Ages (which the Protestants are willing to have the Catalogue tried by) then it seems the Protestants have a better Way to know what Books are Canonical, than is the infallible Way of Oral Tradition; and so long as 'tis better, no Matter though it be not called infallible.

§. 6. Thirdly,

† P. 15.

§. 6. *Thirdly*, He says † the Protestants cannot know, *that the very Original, or a perfectly true Copy of these Books, hath been preserved.* It is not necessary that they should know either of these; it is sufficient that they know that those Copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any Matter of Faith or Practice; and that they have sufficient Assurance of this, I have already shewn. And how doth he prove the Contrary? By his usual Argument; with saying *it is manifestly impossible.* But how do the Church of Rome know that they have perfectly true Copies of the Scriptures in the Original Languages? They do not pretend to know this; the learned Men of that Church acknowledge the various Readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwise than by probable Conjecture (as we also may do) which of those Readings is the true one. And why should it be more necessary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reasonable to content themselves with knowing, that no material Corruptions have crept in those Books, so may we. And that there have not, we know by better Arguments than Oral Tradition, even by the Assurance we have of God's vigilant Providence, and from a moral Impossibility in the Thing, that a Book so universally dispersed, and translated into so many Languages, and constantly read in the Assemblies of Christians, should have been materially corrupted, so as that all those Copies and Translations should have agreed in those Corruptions. And this Reason St. Austin † gives of the Preservation of the Scriptures entire rather than any other Book; if Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Austin to account for it.

† Ep. 48.

† P. 15.

§. 7. *Fourthly*, He says, † the Protestants, *at least the rudest Vulgar,* can have no Assurance *that those Books are rightly translated,* because they cannot be assured either of the Ability or Integrity of Translators.

† P. 16, 17.

Fifthly, Nor can they (says he †) be assured, *That the Transcribers, and Printers, and Correctors of the Press, have carefully and faithfully done their Part, in transcribing and printing the several Copies and Translations of Scripture aright; because they only can have Evidence of the right Letter of Scripture, who stood at their Elbows attentively watching they should not err in making it perfectly like a former Copy; and even then, why might they not mistrust their own Eyes and Aptness to oversee?* I put these Two Exceptions together, because the same Answer will serve them both. The Grounds of these Exceptions, if they have any, are these: That no Man is to be trusted either for his Skill or Honesty; And, that it is dangerous for Men to trust their own Eyes. Unless both these be true, these Exceptions are of no Force: For if we can be assured that other Men have sufficient Skill in any Thing which we our selves do not sufficiently understand, we may be assured that those who translated the Bible had Skill in the Original Languages; because very credible Persons tell us so, and we have no Reason to doubt their Testimony in this Particular, more than in any other Matter. So that if we can have sufficient Assurance of Mens Integrity in any Thing, we have no Reason to doubt of the Skill of Translators, Transcribers, or Printers: And if we can have no Assurance of Mens Integrity in any Thing, then no Man can be assured there was such a Man as Henry the Eighth; and yet I hope the Church of Rome makes no Doubt of it: Nor can any Man be assured there is such a City as Rome, who hath not seen it; nay, if he have, † *why may he not mistrust his own Eyes?* and, which is the saddest Inconvenience of all, if no Body be to be trusted, nor Mens own Eyes, (and for the same Reason, sure not their Ears) what becomes of the Infallibility of Oral and Practical Tradition? which necessarily

† P. 16.

necessarily supposeth a competent Understanding, a faithful Memory, an honest Mind, in the Generality of those who delivered Christ's Doctrine down to us: And by what Means soever a Man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the Ability and Integrity of Translators, Transcribers, and Printers. But above all, it supposeth that Mens *Ears* and *Eyes* cannot deceive them in those Things which they are taught and see practised.

Is it not very pretty to see what pitiful Shifts Men that serve an *Hypothesis* are put to? When, to maintain *Infallibility*, they are forced to run to the *Extremities of Scepticism*; and to defend the Certainty of Oral Tradition (which depends upon the Certainty of Mens Senses, and an Assurance of the Ability and Integrity of those who were dead Fifteen Hundred Years before we were born) are glad to take Refuge in Principles quite contrary; such as these, That we can have no Assurance, but that whole Professions of Men † *might hap to be Knaves*; that we can have † P. 16. no sufficient Evidence that any Man made his Copy perfectly like the Former, unless † *we stood at his Elbow attentively watching him*: Nay, and if † P. 16. we did so, we have still Reason to distrust our Senses. In short, all humane Faith supposeth Honesty among Men; and that for Matters of Fact and plain Objects of Sense, the general and uncontrolled Testimony of Mankind is to be credited; and for Matters of peculiar Skill and Knowledge, that the Generality of those who are accounted skilful in that kind are to be relied upon: For, as *Aristotle* well observes, there is no greater Sign of an *undisciplin'd Wit* (or, to use one of Mr. S's fine Phrases †, of a † Preface. Man not acquainted with the Paths of Science) than to expect greater Evidence for Things than they are capable of. Every Man hath Reason to be assured of a Thing which is capable of sufficient Evidence, when he hath as much Evidence for it as the Nature of that Thing will bear, and as the Capacity he is in will permit him to have; and, as Mr. White says well, * *Satisfaction is to be given to every one according to his Capacity; it is* * Answ. to the Lord Falkland. P. 33. *sufficient for a Child to believe his Parents, for a Clown to believe his Preacher.* And this is universally true in all Cases where we have not better or equal Evidence to the contrary. But such is the Unhappiness of the Popish Doctrines, that if People were permitted the free use of the Scripture, they would easily discern them to have no probable Foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be safe for their Preachers to tell the People that the Scripture is the only *Rule of Faith*, lest they should find Cause not to believe them when they teach Doctrines so plainly contrary to that Rule.

§. 8. Lastly, He says, * the Protestants cannot be certain of the true Sense † P. 17. of Scripture. Does he mean of plain Texts, or obscure ones? Of the true Sense of plain Texts I hope every one may be certain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But it may be there are no plain Texts in the Scriptures; then the Reason of it must be (till Mr. S. can shew a better) either because it is impossible for any one to write plainly, or because God cannot write so plainly as Men; or because we have good Reason to think that he would not write Things necessary for every one to believe, so as Men might clearly understand him.

But he tells us, † *The numerous Comments upon Scripture* are an Evidence † P. 17. that no Man can be certain of the true Sense of it. I hope not; for if those numerous Commentators do generally agree in the Sense of plain Texts (as 'tis certain they do) then this Argument signifies nothing as to such Texts; and as for those which are *obscure*, let Commentators differ

† P. 17.

† Hom. 32. de
Consubstant.† Hom. 7. de
Sancto Phoca.

differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary Points of Faith and Matters of Practice are delivered in plain Texts. He adds, † *There are infinite Disputes about the Sense of Scripture, even in the most concerning Points, as in that of Christ's Divinity.* But are not Commentators, both Protestant and Popish, generally agreed about the Sense of Scripture in that Point? And what if some out of Prejudice do mistake, or out of Perverseness do wrest the plainest Text of Scripture for the Divinity of Christ to another Sense? Is this any Argument that those Texts are not sufficiently plain? Can any Thing be spoken or written in Words so clear from Ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced Mind shall not be able to vex and force to another Meaning? God did not write the Scriptures for the Froward and the Captious, but for those who will read them with a free and unprejudiced Mind, and are willing to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the Writings of the Fathers, he could not but have taken Notice with what Confidence they attempted to prove the Divinity of Christ out of Scripture, as if that did afford convincing Arguments for this Purpose. St. Chrysostome † professes to demonstrate out of Scripture, *That the Son is of the same Substance with the Father*; and relies upon Scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of Argument: So that it seems St. Chrysostome was not acquainted with the Insufficiency of Scripture for the Conviction of Hereticks in this Point; and that he was either ignorant of the (*infallible*) Way of demonstrating this Point from Oral Tradition, or had no great Opinion of it. The same Father elsewhere, † arguing against Hereticks about the Divinity of Christ, says, *That they pervert the Scriptures, to strengthen their Heresy from thence.* But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the Scripture, and say that this Doctrine is not there delivered with sufficient Clearness; but contrarywise he says, *that the Scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt Minds of Hereticks will not see what is there contain'd.* Had St. Chrysostome been a true Son of the Traditionary Church, he would have laid hold of this Occasion to villify the Scriptures, and to shew the Necessity of regulating our Faith not by such uncertain Records, but by the infallible Reports of Oral Tradition.

§. 9. But because Mr. S. lays great Weight (in several Parts of his Book) upon this Exception against Scripture, *viz. That Protestants cannot be certain of the true Sense of it*; therefore I shall not content my self, only to have shewn that we may be sufficiently certain of the Sense of Scripture, so far as to understand all necessary Matters of Faith and Practice, and that more than this is not necessary; but shall likewise return this Exception upon him, by enquiring into these Two Things;

1. How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true Sense of Scripture than the Protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true Sense of Tradition, than Protestants of the true Sense of Scripture?

1. How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true Sense of Scripture than Protestants? They pretend to have an Oral Tradition of the true Sense of it, delivered down from Father to Son. But this only reacheth to those Texts which are coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine; as for all other Parts of Scripture, they are as useless to Papists, as they suppose they are to us; because wanting the Help of Oral Tradition, they cannot be certain of one Tittle of them. And as for those Texts, the Sense whereof is conveyed down by Oral Tradition; this Sense is, I hope, delivered in some Words or other; And have all Preachers,

Preachers, and Fathers, and Mothers, and Nurses, the Faculty of delivering this Sense in Words so plain as cannot possibly be mistaken or wrested to another Sense? I am sorry that when every one hath this Faculty of speaking their Thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghost should be represented as not able to convey his Mind to Men in intelligible Words. And does not his own Objection rebound upon himself? If the Church have a certain Sense of Scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous Comments of the Fathers upon it, and of later Writers of their Church, and the infinite Disputes about the Sense of it, in the most concerning Points? *viz. The Efficacy of God's Grace, the Supremacy of St. Peter, the Infallibility of a Pope and Council by immediate Assistance of the Holy Ghost?* What a Stir is made about the Sense of *Dabo tibi Claves, Tu es Petrus, & super hanc Petram, &c. Pasce oves?* Do not they differ about the Meaning of these Texts among themselves, as much as they do from the Fathers, and from the Protestants? Some understanding them of St. Peter's Supremacy only, others of his Infallibility, others of his Infallibility only in and with a general Council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or Council from any immediate Assistance, but only from the rational Force of Tradition, supposing that the Pope and Council hold to it. If Oral Tradition have brought down a certain Sense of these Texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? If it have not (to use a hot Phrase of his own †) *'tis perfect Phrenzy to say they can be certain of the true* † P. 17. *Sense of Scripture.*

If he say, they are by Tradition made certain of the true Sense of Scripture, *so far as it concerns the main Body of Christian Doctrine*, and do all agree in it, and that is sufficient; then I ask him, What are those Points of Faith which make up the Body of Christian Doctrine? He will tell me, they are those which all Catholics agree to have descended to them from the Apostles by a constant and uninterrupted Tradition. I enquire farther, how I shall know what is the certain Sense of Scripture so far as it concerns these Points? He must answer as before, that *that is the true Sense which all Catholics agree to have descended to them by Tradition.* Which amounts to this, that *all Catholics do agree in the Sense of Scripture so far as they do all agree in it.* It is to be hoped, that the Protestants (how much soever at present they differ about the Sense of Scripture) may in Time come to as good an Agreement as this. This brings to my Remembrance a Passage or Two of Mr. Cressy; the one in his *Appendix*, † where he tells us, *That as it is impossible that Hereticks* † Exomolog. 2d Edit. P. 554. *should agree any other way than in Faction; so it is impossible that Catholics should differ in Points of Faith.* Why so? Were not those Catholics first, who afterwards became Hereticks; and when they became so, did they not differ in Points of Belief? Yes; but here lies the Conceit, When they began to differ, then they ceas'd to be Catholics; therefore Catholics can never differ in Points of Faith. The other Passage is where he says, † *That he hath forsaken a Church where Unity was impossible, &c. and betaken* † Exomolog. c. 53. Sect. 2. *himself to a Church where Schism is impossible.* This last Clause, *That Schism is impossible in their Church*, cannot possibly be true but in the same absurd and ludicrous Sense, in which it is impossible for Catholics to differ in Points of Belief. For he cannot deny but that it is possible for Men to break off from the Communion of their Church, which in his Sense is Schism. But here is the Subtilty of it, No Schismatick is of their Church, because so soon as he is a Schismatick he is out of it; therefore Schism is impossible in their Church. And is it not as impossible

ble in the Church of *England*? Where Mr. Cr. might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiser Reason of forsaking her.

† Dial. 2.
Sect. 12.

§. 10. But to return to our Purpose. Mr. *Rushworth* † acknowledgeth, that the Scripture is of it self sufficiently plain as to Matters of practice; for he asks, *Who is so blind as not to see that these Things are to be found in Scripture by a sensible, common, and discreet reading of it; though perhaps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular Word and Syllable, any of these Things would vanish away we know not how?* So that for the Direction of our Lives and Actions, he confesseth the Scripture to be sufficiently plain, if Men will but read it *sensibly* and *discreetly*; and (he says) that he is blind that does not see this. But who so blind as he that will not see, that the Sense of Scripture is as plain in all necessary Points of Faith? I am sure St. *Austin* makes no Difference, when he tells us, † That in those Things which are plainly set down in Scripture, we may find all those Things in which Faith and Manners of Life are comprehended. And why cannot Men, in reference to Matters of Faith as well as of Practice, read the Scriptures *sensibly* and *discreetly*, without such a rigorous balancing of every Word and Syllable, as will make the Sense vanish away we know not how? If the Scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it *sensibly* and *discreetly*, I do not understand what greater Plainness can be desir'd in a Rule; nor can I imagine what kind of Rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious Cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

† De Doctr.
Christ. L. 2.

Well, suppose the Scripture be not sufficiently clear as to Matters of Faith, and hereupon I have Recourse to the Church for the true Sense of Scripture, must I believe the Church's Sense to be the true Sense of such a Text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine Sense of the Words? Yes, that I must, or else I make my self, and not the Church, Judge of the Sense of Scripture, which is the grand Heresy of the Protestants. But then I must not suppose, much less believe, that the Church's Sense of such a Text is contrary to the genuine Meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so: This is hard again on the other Hand; especially if that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. *Holden* and Mr. *Cressy*, viz. That though general Councils cannot mistake in the Points of Faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the Confirmation of them from Texts of Scripture, that is, they may be mistaken about the Sense of those Texts. And if Mr. S. think his Brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second Council of *Nice* (to mention no other) which, to establish their Doctrine of Image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest Texts of Scripture, that I can hardly believe that any Papist in the World hath the Forehead to own that for the true Sense of those Texts which is there given by those Fathers.

§. 11. Secondly, How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true Sense of their Traditional Doctrines, than the Protestants can be of the true Sense of Scripture? And this is worthy our Enquiry, because if the Business be search'd to the Bottom, it will appear (besides all other Inconveniencies, which Oral Tradition is much more liable to than Scripture) that the certain Sense and Meaning of Traditional Doctrine is as hard to come at as the Sense of Scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary Consequence from their own Concessions. Mr. *White* and Mr. S. say that the great Security of Tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain Phrases and Set-forms of Expression, but the same Sense is con-

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conveyed and settled in Mens Hearts by various Expressions. But according to Mr. *Rusworth*, this renders Tradition's Sense uncertain; for he says, * 'Tis impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same Sense in divers Words. So that if Men do not receive Tradition in a sensible, common, discreet Way, (as Mr. *Rusworth* speaks concerning reading the Scriptures) but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular Phrase, Word and Syllable, the Sense of Tradition will be in the very same Danger of Uncertainty, and be liable to vanish we know not how. Dr. *Holden* † lays down these Two Principles, First, That no Truth can be conveyed down from Man to Man but by Speech; and Speech cannot be but by Words; and all Words are either equivocal in themselves, or liable to be differently understood by several Persons: Secondly, That such is the Frame of Man's Mind, that the same Truths may be differently apprehended and understood by different Persons: And if this be true, then Traditional Doctrines, if they be delivered by Speech and Words, will be liable to Uncertainties and Ambiguities, as to their Sense, as well as Scripture. Mr. *Cressy* † tells us, That Reason and Experience shew, that Differences will arise even about the Writings of the Fathers, and any Thing but the Testimony of the present Church. If this be true, Tradition wholly falls into Uncertainty: For if Difference will arise about the Writings of the Fathers, how they are to be interpreted, I suppose the Writings of Councils will be liable to the same Inconvenience: And if the whole present Church cannot declare her Sense of any Traditional Doctrine otherwise than by a Council (unless with the Jesuits they will epitomize the Church into the Pope) and the Decrees of a Council cannot be universally dispers'd (or at least never use to be) but by Writing: And if Differences will arise about the Interpretation of that Writing, as well as any other, then this present infallible Authority (which Mr. *Cressy* magnifies so much for ending Differences) leaves all Controversies arising about the Sense of Tradition as indeterminable as ever; and they must for ever remain so, till general Councils have got the Knack of penning their Decrees in Words, which will so infallibly express their Meaning to the most captious Caviller, that no Difference can possibly arise about the Interpretation of them; or else (which will be more suitable to this wise Hypothesis) till general Councils (being convinc'd by Mr. *S's Demonstrations*) shall come to understand themselves so well, as not to entrust their Decrees any more to the uncertain Way of Writing, but for the future to communicate them to the World by the infallible Way of Oral Tradition. And to mention no more, Mr. *Knott*, † (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain Sense of Scripture is only to be had from the Church) speaks to this Purpose, That before we can be certain that this is the true Sense of such a Text, we must either be certain that this Text is capable of no other Sense, as Figurative, Mystical, or Moral; or if it be, we must have some certain and infallible Means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known only by Revelation. If this be true, then by a fair Parity of Reason, before I can be certain that this is the Sense of a Doctrinal Tradition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the Words in which this Tradition was expressed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other Sense (as Figurative, Mystical or Moral) besides that in which I understood them; or if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of these other Senses, then must I have some certain and infallible Means whereby to know in which of these they are taken: And this can no more be known without a Revelation, than which is the true Sense of such a Text

* Dial. 1.
Sect. 6.

† Analyf. Fi
dei l. 1. c. 9.

† Append.
c. 6.

† Answer to
Chilling. c. 1.
Sect. 6.

of Scripture. If it be said, that the Sense of a Traditional Doctrine may by different Expressions be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the Sense of it; this will not help the Matter: For if these kinds of Cavils be good, that a Man cannot be certain of the Meaning of any Words, till he can by an infallible Argument demonstrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other Sense; I say, if this Cavil will hold, then every new Expression, whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any Traditional Doctrine, is liable to the same Inconvenience which those Words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which is evident, that the Traditional Church can be no more certain of the Sense of their Traditional Doctrines, than Protestants may be of the Sense of Scripture.

§. 12. These are his Exceptions contained in his Second Discourse; and of what Force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these Defects might in part be provided against by History, by the Providence of God, by Testimonies of Councils and Fathers, and by the sufficient Clearness of Scripture as to Fundamentals; he endeavours to shew that these signify little to this Purpose.

* P. 17, 18.

First, Not History, * because few are skill'd in History; and they that are not, cannot safely rely upon those that are skill'd, unless they knew certainly that the Historians whom they rely on had secure Grounds, and not bare hear-say for what they writ, and that they were not contradicted by others either extant or perished. How much Credit is to be given to uncontrolled History by the Learned, and how much by the Vulgar to Men of Skill, I have already shewn. I shall only add now, that if this Reasoning be true, it is impossible for any Man to be certain by History of any ancient Matter of Fact, as namely, that there were such Persons as Julius Caesar and William the Conqueror, and that they invaded and conquered England, because (according to him) we cannot know certainly that the Historians, who relate these Things, and upon whose Authority we rely, had secure Grounds, and not bare hear-say, for what they writ: And that they were not contradicted by others either extant or perished, is, I am sure, impossible for any Man to know: For who can tell now what was contained in those Books which are perished? So that if this be requisite to make every Historical Relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of those Books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no Certainty of any ancient Fact or History; for who knows certainly that some Books that are perished did not contradict whatever is written in Books that are extant? Nay, if this Reasoning hold, we can have no Certainty of any Thing conveyed by Oral Tradition: For what tho' the Priest tell me this was the Doctrine of Christ delivered to him? Unless I know that all others agree with him in this Tradition, I cannot rely upon his Testimony: Nor then neither, in Mr. Knott's * Opinion, because the Testimony of Preachers or Pastors is humane and fallible; unless (according to his Jargon) a Conclusion, deduced from Premises, one of which is only probable, and may be sufficient to bring our Understanding to an infallible Act of Faith, viz. if such a Conclusion be taken speculative; whereas, if it be taken reduplicative, as it is a Conclusion, it can only beget a probable Assent; which is to say, that considered barely as a Conclusion, and so far as in Reason it can deserve Assent, it is only probable; but considered as it serves an Hypothesis, and is convenient to be believed with Reason or without, so it is infallible. But to carry the Supposition farther: Put the Case, that the whole present Age assembled in a general

* Answ. to
Chilling. c. 1.
Sect. 33.

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neral Council, should declare that such a Point was delivered to them; yet (according to Mr. S.) we cannot safely rely upon this, unless we knew certainly, that those whom they relied on *had secure Grounds, and not bare Hear-say, for what they delivered; and that they were not contradicted* within the Space of 1500 Years by any of those that are dead; which it is impossible for any one now to know.

But to shew how inconsistent he is with himself in these Matters, I will present the Reader with a *Passage* or *Two* in another Part of his Book, where he endeavours to prove that Men may safely rely on a general and uncontrolled Tradition. He tells us, * *That the common Course of humane Con- P. 49.*
versation makes a Madness not to believe great Multitudes of Knowers, if no pos-
sible Considerations can awaken in our Reason a Doubt that they conspire to de-
ceive us. And a little after, * *Nor can any, unless their Brains rove wildly, or* * *Ibid.*
be unsettled even to the Degree of Madness, suspect Deceit, where such Multitudes
agree unanimously in a Matter of Fact. Now if Men be but supposed to write,
 as well as to speak, what they know, and to agree in their Writings about
 Matter of Fact; then it will be the same Madness not to believe Multitudes of
 Historians, where no possible Consideration can awaken in our Reason a Doubt
 that they have conspired to deceive us; and Mens Brains must rove wildly, and
 be unsettled even to the Degree of Phrenzy, who suspect Deceit where such Multi-
 tudes unanimously agree in a Matter of Fact. And this seems to me to be the
 great Unhappiness of Mr. S's Demonstrations, that they proceed upon
 contradictory Principles; so that in order to the demonstrating of the Un-
 certainty of Books and Writings, he must suppose all those Principles to
 be uncertain, which he takes to be self-evident and unquestionable when
 he is to demonstrate the Infallibility of Oral Tradition.

§. 13. *Secondly*, He tells us, † the Providence of God is no Security † P. 18.
 against those Contingencies the Scriptures are subject to; because we can-
 not be certain of Divine Providence or Assistance to his Church, *but by Let-*
ter of Scripture; therefore that must be first proved certain, *before we men-*
tion the Church, or God's Assistance to her. As if we pretended there were
 any Promise in Scripture that God would preserve the Letter of it entire
 and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwise be assured of it; as if
 the Light of natural Reason could not assure us of God's Providence in ge-
 neral, and of his more especial Care of those Things which are of greatest
 Concernment to us, such as this is, That a Book containing the Method
 and the Terms of Salvation should be preserved from any material Corruption.
 He might as well have said, That without the Letter of Scripture
 we cannot know that there is a God.

§. 14. *Thirdly*, Nor (says he †) can Testimonies of Councils and † P. 18, 19.
Fathers be sufficient Interpreters of Scripture. We do not say they are.
 Our Principle is, that the Scripture doth sufficiently interpret it self, that
 is, is plain to all Capacities, in Things necessary to be believed and practif-
 ed. And the general Consent of Fathers in this Doctrine of the sufficient
 Plainness of Scripture (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good Evidence
 against them. As for obscure and more doubtful Texts, we acknow-
 ledge the Comments of the Fathers to be a good Help, but no certain Rule
 of Interpretation. And that the Papists think so, as well as we, is plain;
 inasmuch as they acknowledge the Fathers to differ among themselves
 in the Interpretation of several Texts: And nothing is more familiar in
 all Popish Commentators, than to differ from the ancient Fathers about
 the Sense of Scripture. And as for Councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy (as I
 said

saïd before) do not think it necessary to believe that always to be the true Sense of Texts which Councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm Points of Faith. Nay, if any Controversy arise about the Sense of any Text of Scripture, it is impossible (according to Mr. *Rushworth's* Principles) for a Council to decide either that, or any other Controversy: For he † makes it his Business to prove, That Controversies cannot be decided by Words; and if this be so, then they cannot be decided at all, unless he can prove that they may be decided without Words, and consequently that Councils may do their Work best in the Quaker's Way, by silent Meetings.

† Dial. 2.
Sect. 8.

† P. 20, 21.

§. 15. Fourthly, Nor can (says he †) the Clearness of Scripture as to Fundamentals, be any Help against these Defects. Why not?

First, Because a certain Catalogue of Fundamentals was never given and agreed to by sufficient Authority, and yet without this all goes to wreck. I hope not, so long as we are sure that God would make nothing necessary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and so long as Men do believe all Things that are plainly revealed (which is every one's Fault if he do not) Men may do well enough without a precise Catalogue. But suppose we say, that the Articles of the Apostle's Creed contain all necessary Matters of simple Belief; what hath Mr. S. to say against this? I am sure the Roman Catechism, set forth by the Decree of the Council of Trent, says * as much as this comes to; viz. That the Apostles having received a Command to preach the Gospel to every Creature, thought fit to compose a Form of Christian Faith, namely to this End, that they might all think and speak the same Things, and that there might be no Schisms among those whom they had called to the Unity of Faith, but that they might all be perfect in the same Sense and the same Opinion: And this Profession of the Christian Faith and Hope, so fram'd by them, the Apostles called the Symbol or Creed. Now how this End of bringing Men to Unity of Faith, and making them perfectly of the same Sense and Opinion, could probably be attained by Means of the Creed, if it did not contain all necessary Points of simple Belief, I can by no Means understand. Besides, a certain Catalogue of Fundamentals is as necessary for them as for us; and when Mr. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. *Chillingworth* had a great Desire to have seen Mr. *Knott's* Catalogue of Fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that when-ever he might with one Hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: But Mr. *Knott*, though he still persisted in the same Demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a Secret to his dying Day. But to put a final Stop to this caning Demand of a Catalogue of Fundamentals (which yet I perceive I shall never be able to do, because it is one of those expletive Topics which Popish Writers, especially those of the lowest Form, do generally make use of to help out a Book) however, to do what I can towards the stopping of it, I desire Mr. S. to answer the Reasons whereby his Friend Dr. *Holden* † shews the Unreasonableness of this Demand, and likewise endeavours to prove that such a Catalogue would not only be useless and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifestly impossible to give such a precise Catalogue.

* Prefat.

† Analyf.
Fid. l. i. c. 4.

† P. 21.

Secondly, He asks, † Is it a Fundamental that Christ is God? If so, Whether this be clear in Scripture then, that God hath Hands, Feet, &c. To which I answer by another Question, Is it clear that there are Figures in Scripture, and that many Things are spoken after the Manner of Men, and by way of Condescension and Accommodation to our Capacities; and that Custom and common Sense teacheth Men to distinguish between Things

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Things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the Scripture saith *God hath Hands and Feet*, and that *Christ is the Vine and the Door*, these are not to be taken properly, as we take this Proposition, that Christ is God, in which no Man hath any Reason to suspect a Figure? When Mr. S. tells us, That *he percheth upon the specifical Nature of Things*, would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence that Mr. S. believed *himself* to be a Bird, and *Nature a Perch*? And yet not only the Scriptures, but all sober Writers, are free from such forc'd and phantastical Metaphors. I remember that *Origen* † taxeth *Celsus's* wilful Ignorance in finding † L. 4. fault with the Scriptures, for attributing to God humane Affections, as Anger, &c. and tells him, that any one who had a Mind to understand the Scriptures, might easily see, that such Expressions were accommodated to *us*, and accordingly to be understood; and that no Man, that will but compare these Expressions with other Passages of Scripture, need to fail of the true Sense of them. But (according to Mr. S.) *Origen* was to blame to find fault with *Celsus* for thinking that the Scripture did really attribute humane Affections to God; for how could he think otherwise, when *the most fundamental Point is not clearer in Scripture, than that God hath Hands, Feet, &c.* How could *Origen* in reason expect from *Celsus* (though never so great a Philosopher) that he should be able, without the Help of Oral Tradition, to distinguish between what is spoken *literally*, and what by a certain Scheme of Speech? *Theodoret* † tells us of one *Audaus*, who held that God had a humane Shape, and bodily Members; but *he* does not say that the Reason of this Error was because he made Scripture the Rule of his Faith, but expressly because *he was a Fool, and did foolishly understand those Things which the Divine Scriptures speak by way of Condescension.* So that although Mr. S. is pleas'd to make this wise Objection, yet it seems (according to *Theodoret*) that Men do not mistake such Texts either for want of Oral Tradition, or of sufficient Clearness in the Scriptures, but for want of common Reason and Sense. And if Mr. S. know of any Rule of Faith that is secure from all Possibility of being mistaken by foolish and perverse Men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its Sake. † Hiz. et. Fabul. l. 4.

S E C T. IV.

§. 1. **I**N his next Discourse he endeavours to shew, that unlearned Persons cannot be justified as acting rationally in receiving the Scripture for the Word of God, and relying upon it as a certain Rule; because they are not capable of Satisfaction concerning these Matters. But I have already shewn that they are, and shall not repeat the same over again. And whereas he says, † That *several Professions all pretend to Scripture, and yet differ, and damn, and persecute one another about these Differences; the Answer is easy: That they all pretend to Scripture, is an Argument that they all acknowledge it to be the Word of God, and the Rule of Faith; and that they are generally agreed about the Sense of those plain Texts which contain the fundamental Points of Faith, is evident in that those several Professions acknowledge the Articles contained in the Apostles Creed to be sufficiently delivered in Scripture: And if any Professions differ about the Meaning of plain Texts, that is not an Argument that plain Texts are obscure, but that some Men are perverse. And if those Pro- † That Scripture is a sufficient Rule to the Unlearned, and to the most rational Doubters. † P. 24.*

Professions damn and persecute one another about the Meaning of obscure Texts, the Scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

† P. 25, 26,
27.

§. 2. And whereas he pretends, † That the Scripture is not able to satisfy Sceptical Dissenters and Rational Doubters, because nothing under a Demonstration can satisfy such Persons so well concerning the Incorruptness of Originals, the Faithfulness of Translations, &c. but that searching and sincere Wits may still maintain their Ground of Suspence with A Might it not be otherwise? This hath been answered already, partly by shewing that the Scripture was not intended to satisfy Scepticks, and that a Demonstration is not sufficient to give Satisfaction to them; and partly by shewing that rational Doubters may have as much Satisfaction concerning those Matters, as the Nature of the Things will bear; and he is not a rational Doubter that desires more.

But that he may see the Unreasonableness of this Discourse, I shall briefly shew him, That all Mankind do in Matters of this Nature accept of such Evidence as falls short of Demonstration; and that his great Friends and Masters, from whom he hath taken the main Grounds of his Book (though he manageth them to less Advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for Men to acquiesce in such Assurance as falls short of Infallibility, and such Evidence as is less than Demonstration. Do not Mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the Antiquity and Authors of several Books, for which they have not demonstrative Evidence? Doth not Aristotle say, that Things of a moral and civil Nature, and Matters of Facts done long ago, are incapable of Demonstration; and that it is Madness to expect it for Things of this Nature? Are there no Passages in Books so plain, that a Man may be sufficiently satisfied that this and no other is the certain Sense of them? If there be none, can any Thing be spoken in plainer Words than it may be written? If it cannot, how can we be satisfied of the certain Sense of any Doctrine orally delivered? And if we cannot be so satisfy'd, where's the Certainty of Oral Tradition? But if Books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied that this is the certain Sense of such and such Passages, then we may reasonably rest satisfied in Evidence for these Matters short of Demonstration. For was ever the Sense of any Words so plain as that there did not remain this Ground of Suspence, that those Words might be capable of another Sense? Mr. Rushworth † says, That disputative Scholars do find Means daily to explicate the plainest Words of an Author to a quite different Sense: And that the World might be furnish'd with an advantageous Instance of the Possibility of this, Raynaudus † (a Writer of their own) hath made a wanton Experiment upon the Apostles Creed, and by a sinister (but possible) Interpretation, hath made every Article of it Heresy and Blasphemy, on purpose to shew that the plainest Words are not free from Ambiguity. But may-be Mr. S. can out-do the Apostles, and can deliver the Christian Doctrine so clearly, that he can demonstrate it impossible for any Man to put any other Sense upon any of his Words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done, but if Mr. S. doeth this, he must both mend his Style and his Way of Demonstration.

† Dial. 2.
Sect. 7.

† De bonis &
malis Libris.

Is Mr. S. sufficiently assured that there is such a Part of the World as America? And can he demonstrate this to any Man without carrying him thither? Can he shew by any necessary Argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the Relations concerning that Place should be false? When his Demonstrations have done their utmost, cannot † a searching and sincere Wit at least maintain his Ground of Suspence with A Might it not be otherwise?

† P. 27.

And

And, with an, Is it not possible that all Men may be Lyars, or that a Company of Travellers may have made use of their Privilege to abuse the World by false Reports, and to put a Trick upon Mankind? or that all those who pretend to go thither, and bring their Commodities from thence, may go to some other Parts of the World, and taking Pleasure in abusing others, in the same manner as they have been imposed upon themselves, may say they have been at *America*? Who can tell but all this may be so? and yet I suppose, notwithstanding the Possibility of this, no Man in his Wits is now possessed with so incredible a Folly as to doubt whether there be such a Place. The Case is the very same as to the Certainty of an ancient Book, and of the Sense of plain Expressions: We have no Demonstration for these Things, and we expect none, because we know the Things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain that any Book is so ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whose Name it bears, or that this is the Sense of such and such Passages in it; it is possible all this may be otherwise, *that is*, it implies no Contradiction: But we are very well assured that it is not; nor hath any prudent Man any just Cause to make the least Doubt of it. For a bare Possibility that a Thing may be, or not be, is no just Cause of doubting whether a Thing be or not. It is possible all the People in *France* may die this Night, but I hope the Possibility of this doth not incline any Man in the least to think it will be so: It is possible the Sun may not rise to Morrow Morning, and yet for all this I suppose that no Man hath the least Doubt but that it will.

§. 3. But because this Principle, viz. *That in Matters of Religion a Man cannot be reasonably satisfy'd with any Thing less than that infallible Assurance which is wrought by Demonstration*, is the main Pillar of Mr. S's Book; therefore, beside what hath been already said to shew the Unreasonableness of this Principle, I shall take a little Pains to manifest to him how much he is contradicted in this by the Chief of his Brethren of the Tradition, viz. Mr. *Rushworth*, Dr. *Holden*, Mr. *Cressy*, and Mr. *White*, who, besides Mr. S. and one I. B. are (so far as I can learn) all the publick Patrons that ever this Hypothesis of Oral Tradition hath had in the World; and if Mr. *White* (as I have Reason to believe) was the Author of those Dialogues which pass under *Rushworth's* Name, the Number of them is yet less. Now if I can shew that this Principle (esteem'd by Mr. S. so fundamental to this Hypothesis) is plainly contradicted by the principal Assertors of Oral Tradition, I shall hereby gain one of these Two Things, either that these great Patrons of Oral Tradition were ignorant of the true Foundation of their own Hypothesis, or that this Principle is not necessary for the Support of it. Not that I would be so understood as if I did deny that these very Persons do sometimes speak very big Words of the Necessity of Infallibility: But if it be their Pleasure to contradict themselves, as I have no Reason to be displeased, so neither to be concerned for it; but shall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them first to themselves, and then (if he pleases) afterwards to himself.

§. 4. I begin with Mr. *Rushworth* of immortal Memory, for that noble Attempt of his to persuade the World that notwithstanding he was the first Inventor of this Hypothesis of Oral Tradition, yet he could prove that the Church had in all Ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her only Rule of Faith. He, in his Third Dialogue, * when his Nephew objects to him, That perhaps a Protestant would say that all his foregoing Discourse was but Probability and Likelihood, and therefore to hazard a Man's Estate upon

Sect. 3. & 4.

Peradventures, were something hard, and not very rationally done: Replies thus to him, *What Security do your Merchants, your States-men, your Soldiers, those that go to Law, nay, even those that till your Grounds and work for their Livings; what Security, I say, do all these go upon? Is it greater than the Security which these Grounds afford? Surely no; and yet no Man esteems them foolish. All humane Affairs are hazardous, and have some Adventure in them: And therefore he who requires evident Certainty only in Matters of Religion, discovers in himself a less Mind to the Goods promised in the next Life, than to these which he seeks here in this World upon weaker Assurance. Howsoever, the greatest Evidence that can be to him that is not capable of convincing Demonstrations (which the greatest Part of Mankind fall short of) is but conjectural. So that (according to Mr. Rushworth) it is not Reason and Discretion, but want of Love to God and Religion, which makes Men require greater Evidence for Matters of Religion than for humane Affairs, which yet (he tells us) are hazardous, and have some Adventure in them, and consequently are not capable of Demonstration. Besides, if demonstrative Evidence be an essential Property of the Rule of Faith, (as Mr. S. affirms) then this Rule cannot (according to Mr. Rushworth) be of any use to the greatest Part of Mankind, because they are not capable of convincing Demonstrations. Again, Do but consider (says he †) how unequal and unjust a Condition it is, that the Claim of the present Church shall not be heard, unless she can confute all the Peradventures that Wit may invent, and solve all the Arguments which the infinite Variety of Time, Place, and Occasions may have given Way unto; and then you will see how unreasonable an Adversary he is, who will not be content with any Satisfaction, but such as Man's Nature scarcely affords. And is it not equally unjust in Mr. S. not to let Scripture's Claim be heard, unless we can confute every Peradventure [and might it not be otherwise] that Wit may invent? See then how unreasonable an Adversary Mr. S. is, who will not be content with any Satisfaction but such as (according to Mr. Rushworth) Man's Nature scarcely affords.*

† Ib. Sect. 6.

* L. i. c. 1.

Dr. Holden (I confess) states the Matter somewhat cautiously, when he tells us, * That it shall suffice for the present to determine, that the Wisdom of the Creator hath afforded us such an Assurance, especially of Truths necessary to Salvation, as is suitable to our Nature, and best fitted for the safe Conduct of our Lives in Moral and Religious Affairs: But if we interpret these general Expressions by the Passages I before cited out of Mr. Rushworth (as in reason we may, since the Doctor is beholding to him for the best Part of his Book) then nothing can make more against Mr. S's Principle.

† C. 19. Sect. 5.

§. 5. Mr. Cressy, in his Exomologesis, † says, That such Teachers as approached nearest to the Fountain of Truth, Christ and his Apostles, had Means of informing themselves in Apostolical Tradition incomparably beyond us. Mr. S. may do well to shew what those Means were which are so incom-

† C. 32. Sect. 4.

parably beyond his Infallibility and Demonstration. The same Author † does very much applaud Stapleton's Determination of the Question concerning the Church's Infallibility, which is as follows, That the Church does not expect to be taught by God immediately by new Revelations, but makes use of several Means, &c. as being govern'd not by Apostles, &c. but by ordinary Pastors and Teachers. That these Pastors, in making use of these several Means of Decision, proceed not as the Apostles did, with a peculiar infallible Direction of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential Collection not always necessary. That to the Apostles, who were the first Masters of Evangelical Faith, and Founders of the Church, such an infallible Certitude of Means was necessary: Not so now to the Church, &c. If this be true, That an infallible Certitude

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of Means is not now necessary to the Church, and that her Pastors do now, in deciding Matters of Faith, proceed only with a prudent Collection not always necessary; then it should seem that a searching Wit may maintain his Ground and Suspence, even against the Church also, with A Might it not be otherwise? Again, Mr. Cressy † tells us, That Truth and our Obligation to † Append. c. believe it, is in an higher Degree in Scripture, than in the Decisions of the Church, as Bellarmine acknowledges; which is to say, that we may have greater Assurance of the Truth of Doctrines contain'd in the Scriptures, than we can have of any Doctrine from the Determination of the Church. But if we have the greatest Assurance that can be of Truths deliver'd to us by the Church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him what that higher Degree of Assurance is which Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that (which yet I cannot but by the Way take Notice of) that Mr. Cressy, by his Approbation of this Determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the Scripture above the Church as to one of the most essential Properties of the Rule of Faith, viz. the Certainty of it.

But the most eminent Testimony to my Purpose in Mr. Cressy, is that famous Passage * (which hath given so much Offence to several of his own Church) wherein he acknowledges the Unfortunateness (to him) of the Word Infallibility, and tells us, That he could find no such Word in any Council; That no Necessity appear'd to him, that either he or any other Protestant should ever have heard that Word nam'd, and much less press'd with so much Earnestness as of late it has generally been in Disputations and Books of Controversy; and that Mr. Chillingworth combats this Word with too great Success, insomuch that if this Word were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chillingworth's Arguments would lose the greatest Part of their Strength; and that if this Word were confin'd to the Schools where it was bred, there would be still no Inconvenience: And that since by manifest Experience the English Protestants think themselves so secure, when they have Leave to stand or fall by that Word, and in very Deed have so much to say for themselves when they are pressed unnecessarily with it: Since likewise it is a Word capable of so high a Sense that we cannot devise one more full and proper to attribute to God himself, &c. Since all this is so, he thinks he cannot be blamed, if such Reasons move him to wish that the Protestants may never be invited to combat the Authority of the Church under that Notion. A very ingenuous Acknowledgment, and as cross to Mr. S's Principle as any Thing can be. But the Word Infallibility was not so unfortunate to Mr. Cressy, as his untoward Explication of the fore-cited Passage in his Appendix, which he afterwards published chiefly by way of Vindication of himself against the Learned Author of the Preface to my Lord Falkland's Discourse of Infallibility. There he * tells us, That there are several Degrees of Infallibility. And that we may know what Degrees of Infallibility he thinks necessary to be attributed to the Church, this following Passage will inform us: Methinks (he says) if God have furnish'd his Divine and Supernatural Truth with Evidence equal to this, the Sun will shine to Morrow, or that there will be a Spring and Harvest next Year, we are infinitely obliged to bless his Providence, and justly condemned, if we refuse to believe the least of such Truths, as shewing less Affection to save our Souls, than the dull Plowmen to sow their Corn, who certainly have far less Evidence for their Harvest than Catholicks for their Faith; and yet they insist not peevishly upon every capricious Objection, nor exact an infallible Security of a plentiful reaping next Summer, but notwithstanding all Difficulties and Contingencies proceed chearfully in their painful Husbandry. So that according

* C. 40. Sect. 3, &c.

* Append. Sect. 2 and 3.

to this Discourse, whatever Degree of Assurance the Church hath, or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain that no further Degree is necessary than what the Husbandman, when he sows, hath of a plentiful Harvest; and that Men are justly condemned if they refuse to believe the least Truth upon such Security, which yet (by his own Acknowledgment) is liable to Contingencies: Nay farther, that Men are not reasonable, but *peevish*, in *exacting infallible Security*, and *insisting upon every capricious Objection*, such as is Mr. S's *Might it not be otherwise?* Now as to this Degree of Assurance, or (as he calls it) Infallibility, I cannot but grant what he says of it to be most true, *viz.* That in a *severe Acception of the Word* it is not *rigorously infallible*; that is (as he explains it) it is not *absolutely impossible*, nor does it *imply a flat Contradiction* that the Thing whereof we are so assured may be otherwise: But then I utterly deny, that according to any true Acception of this Word, such a Degree of Assurance as he speaks of can be called Infallibility; and withal I affirm, That none of those several Degrees of Infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an absolute Impossibility, can with any tolerable Propriety of Speech, or regard to the true Meaning and Use of the Word, have the Name of Infallibility given to them. For Infallibility can signify nothing else but an utter Impossibility that one should be deceived in that Matter as to which he is supposed to be infallible; and to say such a Thing is impossible, is to say that the Existence of it implies a flat Contradiction; So that whosoever asserts Degrees of Infallibility, is obliged to shew that there are Degrees of absolute Impossibilities, and of perfect Contradictions, and he had need of a very sharp and piercing Wit, that is to find out Degrees where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in respect of the Objects of Knowledge, it is easy to conceive how Infallibility may be extended to more Objects or fewer; but in respect of the Degree of Assurance (of which Mr. Cressy speaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of *all possibility* of being deceived in those Things wherein he is supposed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the Possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of *all possibility* of being deceived, and whosoever is less than this is not infallible, because he only is so who is out of *all possibility* of being deceived in those Matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible: So that Mr. Cressy's lower Degrees of Infallibility are no Degrees of that Assurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no Degrees) but of that Assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this Dust about the Degrees of Infallibility, had it not been that by the Means of such a Cloud he might make the more convenient Escape out of that Strait he was in between the Clamours of his own Church, and the Advantage which his Adversaries made of his free and open Discourse against Infallibility: For any one that carefully reads his Book, will find that he understands nothing by the Infallibility of the Church, but an *Authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her Decisions*, which is no more but what every Supreme Civil Judge hath in Matters, *viz.* a Power to determine those Controversies that lie before him as well as he *can* or *will*, and when that is done every one is bound to submit to such Determinations; but yet for all this, no Man ever dreamt a Supreme Civil Judge to be *infallible* more than another Man. I do not now dispute the Extent of the Church's Authority; but if she have no other Infallibility but what a full Authority of Decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

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Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how *unfortunate* and *disingenuous* he is in explaining the Meaning of these Words of his own, viz. [*Against this Word of Infallibility Mr. Chillingworth's Book especially combats, and this with too too great Success*] which in his Appendix * he inter- * C. 5. Sect. 6.
 pretends thus; *Success, I mean not against the Church, but against his own Soul, and the Souls of his Fellow English Protestants, &c.* As if one that had wished well to Caesar should have said, *That Pompey had fought against him with too too great Success*; and being afterwards challenged by Caesar's Party, as having said that Pompey had conquered Caesar, he should explain himself thus, *Success, I mean not against Caesar, but against his own Life, and the Lives of his Followers.* Can any Thing be finer than for any Man to say, that by Pompey's Success in fighting against Caesar, he means that Caesar had beaten Pompey? Which is no more than if one should take the Liberty to interpret *White* by *Black*.

§. 6. Mr. White doth most expressly contradict this Principle of Mr. S's in these following Passages. In his Preface to Mr. Rushworth he says, *That such a Certainty as makes the Cause always work the same Effect, though it take not away the absolute Possibility of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckoned in the Degree of true Certainty; and that those Authors are mistaken who undervalue it.* So that it seems Mr. S. is mistaken in affirming that a Man cannot be certain of any Thing so long as there is any Possibility that it may be otherwise. In his Answer to my Lord Falkland he says, * * P. 14, 15:
That in moral Matters, and such as are subject to humane Action, we must expect such Assurance as humane Actions bear. If for the Government of your spiritual Life you have as much as for the Management of your natural and civil Life, what can you expect more? Two or Three Witnesses of Men beyond Exception will cast a Man out of not only his Lands, but Life and all. He that among Merchants will not adventure where there is a Hundred to One of gaining, will be accounted a silly Factor: And among Soldiers, he that will fear Danger where but One of a Hundred is slain, shall not escape the Stain of Cowardize. What then shall we expect in Religion, but to see a main Advantage on the one Side which we may rest our selves on? And for the rest, remember we are Men subject to Chance and Mutability, and thank God he hath given us that Assurance in a supernatural Way, which we are contented withal in our civil Ventures and Possessions, which nevertheless God knoweth we often love better, and would hazard less than the unknown Good of the Life to come. Again, † If God Al- † P. 30:
mighty hath in all Sorts and Manners provided his Church that she may enlighten every Man in his Way that goeth the Way of a Man, then let every Man consider which is the fit Way for himself, and what in other Matters of that Way he accounteth Evidence. And if there be no Interest in his Soul to make him loth to believe, what in another Matter of the like Nature he doth not stick at, or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I fear not his Choice. Once more; directing a Man in his Search after rational Satisfaction in Matters of Religion, he hath this Passage: † Besides this he must have this Care, that he † P. 46:
seek what the Nature of the Subject can yield; and not as those Physicians, who when they have promised no less than Immortality, can at last only reach to some Conservation of Health or Youth in some small Degree: So I could wish the Author to well assure himself first that there is possible an Infallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented with nothing less; for what if humane Nature should not be capable of so great a Good? Would he therefore think it fitting to live without any Religion, because he could not get such a one as himself desired, though with more than a Man's Wish? Were it not rational to see, whether
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among Religions some one have not such notable Advantages over the rest, as in Reason it might seem humane Nature might be contented withal? Let him cast his Account with the dearest Things he hath, his own or Friends Lives, his Estate, his Hope of Posterity, and see upon what Terms of Advantage he is ready to venture all these; and then return to Religion, and see whether, if he do not venture his Soul upon the like, it be truly Reason, or some other not confessed Motive, which withdraws him. For my own Part, as I doubt not of an Infallibility, so I doubt not but setting that aside, there be those Excellencies found on the Catholick Party which may force a Man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath upon it before all other Religions and Sects in the World. Why then may not one who after long searching findeth no Infallibility, rest himself on the like, supposing Man's Nature affords no better?

* Letter to
his Answerer.
P. 5.

Are not these fair Concessions, which the Evidence and Force of Truth have extorted from these Authors? So that it seems that That which Mr. S. calls * a civil Piece of Atheistry, is advanced in most express Words by his best Friends; and therefore I hope he will (as he threatens me) be smart with them in opposition to so damnable and fundamental an Error. And whenever he attempts this, I would entreat him to remember that he hath these Two Things to prove: First, That no Evidence but Demonstration can give a Man sufficient Assurance of any Thing. Secondly, That a bare Possibility that a Thing may be otherwise, is a rational Cause of Doubting, and a wise Ground of Suspence: Which, when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him his Infallibility.

S E C T. V.

That Scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute Adversaries; and that it is sufficiently certain.
† P. 28.

† P. 31.

* P. 31.

† P. 116.

§. I. **T**HE last Part of this Third Discourse endeavours to shew, that the Scripture is not convictive of the most obstinate and acute Adversaries. As for the Obstinate, he knows my Mind already. Let us see why the most acute Adversary may not be convinced by Scripture: Because, as he objects, † First, We cannot be certain that this Book is God's Word, because the many strange Absurdities and Heresies in the open Letter as it lies, as that God hath Hands and Feet, &c. and because of the Contradiction in it: To which I have already returned an Answer. Secondly, Because (as he saith †) we cannot be certain of the Truth of the Letter in any particular Text, that was not foisted in, or some way altered in its Significativeness; and if it be a negative Proposition, that the Particle [not] was not inserted, if affirmative, not left out. And if we pretend to be certain of this, he demands * our Demonstration for it. But how unreasonable this Demand is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it yet farther, I ask him, How their Church knows, that the Particle [not] was not left out of any Text in which it is now found in their Copies? I know he hath a ready Answer, viz. by Oral Tradition. But this (according to him †) only reaches to Scriptures Letter so far as it is coincident with the main Body of Christian Doctrine; concerning the rest of Scripture it is impossible (according to his own Principles) that they should have any Security that the Particle [not] was not unduly inserted, or left out by the Transcribers. Nay, as to those Texts of Scripture which fall in with the main Body of Christian Doctrine, I demand his Demonstration that the Particle [not] was not unduly inserted or left out, not only in those Texts, but also in the Oral Tradition of the Doctrines coincident with the Sense of those Texts. If he say, It was impossible any Age should conspire to leave out or

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or insert the Particle [*not*] in the Oral Tradition; so say I it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the written Text: But then I differ from him thus far, That I do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can rigorously be demonstrated, but only morally impossible, so that no body hath any Reason to doubt of it; which, to a prudent Man, is as good as a Demonstration. *Pyrrho* himself never advanced any *Principle of Scepticism* beyond this, *viz.* That Men ought to question the Credit of all Books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as to every Sentence in them, that the Particle [*not*] was not inserted (if it be affirmative) or left out (if it be negative). If so much be required to free a Man from reasonable Doubting concerning a Book, how happy are they that have attained to Infallibility? What he saith concerning the *Varia Lectiones* † of Scripture, hath already had a sufficient Answer: † P. 31.

§. 2. In his *Fourth Discourse* he endeavours to shew, † That the Scrip- † P. 33.
ture is not certain in it self, and consequently not ascertained to us. First,
Not certain, materially considered † as consisting of such and such Characters; † P. 34.
because Books are liable to be burnt, torn, blotted, worn out. We grant it is
not impossible but that any, or all the Books in the World, may be burnt:
But then we say likewise, That a Book so universally dispersed may easily
be preserved; though we have no Assurance that God will preserve it, in
case all Men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour or suffer
the Abolition of it. But it seems the Scriptures cannot be a Rule of Faith
if they be liable to any external Accidents: And this (he tells us †) † P. 34.
Though it may seem a remote and impertinent Exception, yet to one who consi-
ders the wise Dispositions of Divine Providence, it will deserve a deep Consi-
deration; because the Salvation of Mankind being the End of God's making
Nature, the Means to it should be more settled, strong and unalterable, than
any other Piece of Nature whatever. But notwithstanding this wise Reason,
this Exception still seems to me both remote and impertinent: For if this
which he calls a Reason be a Truth, it will from thence necessarily follow,
not only that the Doctrine of Christ must be conveyed by such a Means
as is more unalterable than the Course of Nature; but also by a clear
Parity of Reason, that all the Means of our Salvation do operate towards
the accomplishing of their End with greater Certainty than the Fire burns,
or the Sun shines, which they can never do, unless they operate more
necessarily than any natural Causes; how they can do so upon voluntary
Agents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§. 3. He proceeds by a long Harangue to shew, † That not only these † P. 34.
material Characters in themselves are corruptible, but in Complexion with
the Causes, actually laid in the World to preserve them entire; because either
those Causes are material, and then they are also liable to continual Alterations;
or spiritual, that is, the Minds of Men, and from these we may with good Rea-
son hope for a greater Degree of Constancy than from any other Piece of Na-
ture; which, by the way, is a very strange Paradox, that the Actions of
voluntary Agents have a greater Certainty and Constancy in them than
those of natural Agents; of which the Fall of Angels and Men, compa-
red with the Continuance of the Sun and Stars in their first State, is a very
good Evidence.

§. 4. But he adds a Caution, * That they are perfectly unalterable from * P. 35.
their Nature, and unerrable, if due Circumstances be observ'd, that is, if due
Proposals

† P. 36.

† Dial. 2
Sect. 7.

Proposals be made to beget certain Knowledge, and due Care used to attend to such Proposals. But who can warrant, That due Proposals will alway be made to Men, and due Care used by them? If these be uncertain, where's the Constancy and Unerrableness he talks so much of? So that notwithstanding the Constancy of this spiritual Cause (the Mind of Man) of preserving Scriptures entire, yet in order to this (as he tells † us) so many Actions are to be done, which are compounded and made up of an innumerable Multitude of several Particularities to be observed, every of which may be mistaken apart, each being a distinct little Action in its single self, such as is the transcribing of a whole Book, consisting of such Myriads of Words, single Letters, and Tittles or Stops; and the several Actions of writing over each of these so short and cursory, that it prevents Diligence, and exceeds humane Care, to keep awake and apply distinct Attentions to every of these distinct Actions. Mr. Rushworth † much out-does Mr. S. in these minute Cavils, for he tells us, That supposing an Original Copy of Christ's Words, written by one of the Evangelists in the same Language, let him have set down every Word and Syllable; yet Men conversant in noting the Changes of Meanings in Words will tell us, that divers Accents in the Pronunciation of them, the turning of the Speaker's Head or Body this Way or that Way, &c. may so change the Sense of the Words, that they will seem quite different in writing from what they were in speaking. I hope that Oral and Practical Tradition hath been careful to preserve all these Circumstances, and hath deliver'd down Christ's Doctrine with all the right Traditionary Accents, Nods, and Gestures necessary for the understanding of it; otherwise the Omission of these may have so altered the Sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. S. We do not pretend to be assured, that it is naturally impossible that the Scriptures should have been corrupted or changed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material Alteration, from as good Arguments as the Nature of the Subject will bear. But if his Reason had not been very short and cursory, he might easily have reflected, that Oral Tradition is equally liable to all these Contingencies: For it doth as much prevent Diligence, and exceed humane Care, to keep awake and apply distinct Attentions to the distinct Actions of speaking, as of writing. And I hope he will not deny, that a Doctrine orally delivered, consists of Words, and Letters, and Accents, and Stops, as well as a Doctrine written; and that the several Actions of speaking, are as short and cursory as of writing.

† P. 38.

† P. 38.

† P. 38.

† P. 38.

§. 5. Secondly, He tells us, † Scripture formally considered as to its Significativeness, is also uncertain; First, † Because of the Uncertainty of the Letter: This is already answered. Secondly, † Because the certain Sense of it is not to be arrived to by the Vulgar, who are destitute of Languages and Arts. True, where Men are not permitted to have the Scriptures in their own Language, and understand no other: But where they are allowed the Scriptures translated into their own Language, they may understand them, all necessary Points of Faith and Practice being sufficiently plain in any Translation of the Bible that I know of. And that † eminent Wits cannot agree about the Sense of Texts which concern the main Points of Faith, hath been spoken to already.

§. 6. As for the Reverence he pretends to Scripture in the Conclusion of his Fourth Discourse, he might have spared that, after all the Raillery and Rudeness he hath used against it. It is easy to conjecture, both from his

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his Principles and his uncivil Expressions concerning them, what his Esteem is of **those** Sacred Oracles. Probably it was requisite in Prudence to cast in a **few good** Words concerning the Scriptures, for the Sake of the more **tender** and squeamish Novices of their Religion, or (as Mr. *Rushworth's Nephew* * says frankly and openly) *for the Satisfaction of indif-* * Dial. 2.
ferent Men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent Respect of Sect. 14.
the Scripture, who it seems are not yet attained to that Degree of Catho-
 lick Piety and Fortitude, as to endure patiently that the Word of God should be **reviled** or slighted. Besides that, in Reference to those whom they hope hereafter to convert (who might be too much alienated from their Religion, if he had expressed nothing but Contempt towards a Book, which Protestants (and Christians in all Ages, till the very Dregs of Popery) have been bred up to a high Veneration of) it was not much amiss to pass this formal Compliment upon the Bible; which the Wise of his own Religion will easily understand, and may serve to catch the rest. But let him not deceive himself, *God is not mocked.*

S E C T. VI.

§. 1. **S** Econdly, He comes to shew, † *That the Properties of a Rule* † P. 41.
of Faith belong to Oral Tradition. And, First, He gives a tedious Explanation of the Nature of this *Oral Practical Tradition*, which amounts to this; That as in Reference to the civil Education of Children, they are taught their own and others Names, to write, and read, and exercise their Trades; so in Reference to Religion, the Children of Christians first bear Sounds, afterwards by Degrees get dim Notions of God, Christ, Saviour, Heaven, Hell, Virtue, Vice, and by Degrees practise what they have heard; they are shewn to say Grace, and their Prayers, to hold up their Hands, or perhaps Eyes, and to kneel, and other Postures. Afterward they are acquainted with the Creed, Ten Commandments, and Sacraments, some common Forms of Prayer, and other Practices of Christianity, and are directed to order their Lives accordingly, and are guided in all this by the Actions and Carriage of the elder Faithful; and this goes on by insensible Degrees, not by Leaps, from a Hundred Years to a Hundred, but from Month to Month, and even less. If this be all that Tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among Protestants, and that with greater Advantage; because we always teach Children to say their Prayers in a known Tongue; so as they may understand them. And we also teach them the Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Sacraments, so many as Christ hath instituted and no more. So that if this be so infallible a Way of conveying the Doctrine of Christianity, we have it among us: And we do over and besides instruct them in the Scriptures, which are the authentick Instrument whereby Christ's Doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not suppose (as his *Hypothesis* necessarily enforceth him to do) that the Christian Doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by some more, by others less perfectly, according to the different Abilities and Diligence of Parents and Teachers, and the various Capacities and Dispositions of Children; whereas his *Hypothesis* falls, if all or at least the Generality of Parents, do not instruct their Children with the like Exactness, and if the Generality of Children do not receive this Doctrine in the same Perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any Variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed, and these Variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all Parents do teach their

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† Apolog.
P. 81.

Children the whole Body of Christ's Doctrine, and explain to them every Part of it in a Hundred or a Thousand several Expressions signifying the same Sense, and not have instanced in Two *Set-forms*, such as the *Creed*, and *Ten Commandments*; for according to Mr. White, † *That cannot be a Tradition, which is delivered down in Set-words.*

§. 2. Having thus explained Oral Tradition, he comes to shew that the Properties of a Rule of Faith agree to it. I have already shewed that the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* are but Two, viz. *That it be plain and intelligible, and that it be sufficiently certain.* The *First* of these, that Oral Tradition may deliver a Doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him: All the Difficulty is about the *Second* Property, whether we have sufficient Assurance that the Doctrine delivered down by Oral Tradition hath received no Corruption or Change in its Conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this *Discourse*, is, That if this Rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the Christian Doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any Change; that is, if the next Age after the Apostles did truly, and without any Alteration, deliver the Christian Doctrine to their immediate Successors, and they to theirs, and so on, then upon this Supposition the Doctrine of the present Traditionary Church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the Apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this Rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any Deviation from it (as he pretends) this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the most absurd Propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative Evidence.

THE

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P A R T III.

*In which Mr. S's Demonstrations and Corollaries
are examined.*

S E C T. I.

§. 1. **B**Efore I come to speak particularly to his *Demonstrations*, I shall premise these *Two Considerations*: *First*, That (according to the Principle of the Patrons of Tradition) no Man can, by his private Reason, certainly find out the true *Rule of Faith*. *Secondly*, That (according to Mr. S.) the Way of Demonstration is no certain Way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. If either of these be made out, his Demonstrations lose all their Force. If the *First* be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the Infallibility of Tradition, nor consequently that That is the *Rule of Faith*: If the *Second*, then the Way of Demonstration which he pretends to take, signifies nothing.

§. 2. *First*, No Man can (according to the Principles of the Patrons of Tradition) by his private Reason certainly find out what is the *Rule of Faith*. Suppose a Heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the Christian Faith; in order to which he is inquisitive after some Rule by which he may take a Measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: He enquires of Christians what their Rule is, and finds them divided about it, some saying that the Scripture, others that Oral Tradition is the Rule. In this Case it is not possible (without a Revelation) for this Man to find out the *Rule of Faith*, but by his own private Reason examining and weighing the Arguments and Pretences of both Sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his Reason demonstrate that the one is a certain and infallible Rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the *Rule of Faith*. But Reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For speaking of demonstrat-

† P. 53. ing the Certainty of Tradition, he tells us, † *That Tradition hath for its Basis Man's Nature, not according to his Intellectuals, which do but darkly grope in the Pursuit of Science, &c.* And again, * speaking how Reason brings Men to the Rule of Faith, he uses this Comparison: *She is like a dim-sighted Man, who used his Reason to find a trusty Friend to lead him in the Twilight, and then relied on his Guidance rationally without using his own Reason at all about the Way it self.* So that (according to him) the Certainty of Tradition cannot be founded on Demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual Part of Man, which only can demonstrate. Besides if it were founded in the intellectual Part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the Certainty of Tradition, because that Faculty which is *dim-sighted*, and does but *grope darkly in the Pursuit of Science*, is incapable of framing Demonstrations. Nor can any Man understand how *dim-sighted* Reason should see clearly to chuse its Guide any more than its Way, especially if it be considered what a pretty Contradiction it is, to say that Reason as it is *dim-sighted* can see clearly.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every Man's Reason *dim-sighted*, he ventures a Step farther, and calls it *hood-wink'd* and *blind*: For he tells us, * *That private Reason is apparently a most fallible Guide*; and he pities * my Lord Falkland's Case, because in the Search of the true Religion he did betake himself to the casual Conduct of *blind, humane, natural Reason*, which afterwards he calls † *a Guide that Two Persons cannot possibly follow together, because no Two Persons (that ever followed any other Guide beside Authority) did or could think all Things to be reasonable that all others thought so*; and by Consequence such a Guide that as long as he continues in that Office, there cannot possibly be any Church any-where: Which (says he) is an infallible Eviction that this is an imaginary seducing Guide, since it is impossible that That should be a Guide appointed for any Christian, which neither Christ nor his Apostles, nor any of their Followers ever mentioned, yea, which formally destroys one of our Twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed, viz. *I believe the Holy Catholick Church.* Thus he does by Reason clearly and infallibly evince, that Reason cannot be otherwise than a most *blind and fallible Guide*. This it is to talk of Things when a Man looks only upon one Side of them; as if because Reason has a *blind Side*, and is uncertain in some Things, therefore we ought to conclude her *universally blind* and uncertain in every Thing; and as if because all Men cannot think all Things reasonable which any one Man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common Principles of Reason be true which Mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Cressy speaks here of the Use of our private Reason in the finding out of our Rule, is clear from what he says in the next Section, viz. *That this hood-wink'd Guide (enquiring into Scripture, and searching after Tradition) may possibly stumble upon the Way to Unity and Truth, that is, the true Catholick Church.* If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend that he can by Reason demonstrate the Infallibility of Tradition, and by this *hood-wink'd Guide* lead Men to the true Rule of Faith? And what a pitiful Encouragement would this be to an inquisitive Philosopher (who knowing no other Guide but his Reason, whereby to find out whether Scripture or Tradition be the Rule) to tell him that by the Help of this *hood-wink'd Guide* he might possibly stumble upon the Right?

A Man may justly stand amazed at the Inconsistency of these Mens Discourses and Principles. In one Mood they are all for Demonstration, and for convincing Men in the Way of perfect Science which is the true Rule of Faith: But then again when another Fit takes them, there's no such Thing

Thing as Science, *humane Reason* grows all on the sudden *dim-sighted*, and at the next Word is struck *stark blind*; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive Person to the true *Rule of Faith*, is to leave him in a *Possibility of stumbling* upon it; but if he be a Heretick that makes use of private Reason for his Guide, then * *it is impossible but that he with his blind Guide should fall into the Pit.* * Append. c. 7. Sect. 8. I cannot for my Part imagine how they can reconcile the *Blindness* of humane Reason with all that Noise which they make about Science and Demonstration; but this I must confess, that these kind of Discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper Arguments to perswade a Man of the Blindness of humane Reason. And indeed there is one Passage in Mr. Cressy which gives me very great Satisfaction concerning these Matters, where he tells us, * *That the Wit and Judgment of Catholicks is to renounce their own Judgment, and depose their own Wit.* * Ibid. Now he that professes to have done this, may write Contradictions, and No-body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous Acknowledgment, that when he forsook our Church and turned Papist, he laid aside his Judgment and Wit; which is just such an heroick Act of Judgment, as if a Man, in a Bravery to shew his Liberty, should sell himself for a Slave. I am glad to understand from an experienced Person, what Charges a Man must be at when he turns *Roman Catholick*, namely, that whoever will embrace that Religion must forfeit his Reason.

§. 3. *Secondly*, The Way of Demonstration is (according to Mr. S.) no certain Way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. In his 4th Appendix † a. † P. 353 and gainst my Lord of Down, one of the *Eight Mines* (as he calls them) 254. which he lays to blow up my Lord's *Dissuasive against Popery*, is this, *That the Method he takes in dissuading cannot be held in Reason to have Power to dissuade, unless it be proper to that Effect, that is, not common to that Effect and a contrary one.* Now, that being most evidently no Method or Way to such an Effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that Effect; 'tis plain to common Sense, that my Lord of Down miscalls his Book a *Dissuasive*, and that it can have in it no Power of moving the Understanding one Way or other, unless he can first vouch some Particularity in the Method he takes, above what's in others in which we experience *Miscarriage*, &c. If this be true, then his Method of Demonstration is no way to make Men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate, because that is most evidently no way to an Effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that Effect; so that 'tis plain to common Sense that Mr. S's Demonstrations can have in them no Power of moving the Understanding one Way or other, unless he can vouch some Particularity in the Demonstrations he pretends to bring, above what is in other pretended Demonstrations in which we experience *Miscarriage*. Do not Thomas and Schotus (as Mr. White tells us †) all along pretend to demonstrate? And yet it is generally believed that (at least where they contradict one another) one of them failed in his Demonstrations. Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have demonstrated that a Man at one Jump might leap from London to Rome? And yet I do not think any one was ever satisfied with his Demonstration. And Mr. S. knows one in the World (whom I will not name because he hath since ingenuously acknowledged his Error) who thought he had demonstrated the *Quadrature of the Circle*, and was so confident of it as to venture the Reputation of his Demonstrations in Divinity upon it, and some of those Divinty Demonstrations

† Exetasis, P. 24.

ons were the very same with Mr. S's. Since therefore the World hath experienced so much *Miscarriage* in the Way of Demonstration; before Mr. S's Demonstrations can be allowed to signify any thing, *he must* (according to his own Law) *vouch some Particularity* in his Way and Method of Demonstration above what is in other Mens. He hath not anywhere (that I remember) told us what that *Particularity* is, wherein his Way of Demonstration is above other Mens: Nor can I, upon the most diligent Search, find any peculiar Advantage that his Way has more than theirs above-mention'd, unless this be one, that he pretends to demonstrate a self-evident Principle; and herein I think he hath plainly the Advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unless this may be counted another Advantage, that he has so extraordinary a Confidence and Conceit of his own Demonstrations, and in this Particular I must acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him: In all other Things his Way of Demonstration is but like his Neighbours.

S E C T. II.

Mr. S's Demonstration
a priori.

§. 1. **I** Come now to examine his *Demonstrations* of this *self-evident Principle* (as he often calls it) that Oral Tradition is a certain and infallible Way of conveying Christ's Doctrine from one Age to another, without any Corruption or Change; which is to say, that it is impossible but that this Rule should always have been kept to. That this is not a *self-evident Principle*, needs no other Evidence than that he goes about to demonstrate it. But yet, notwithstanding this, I think he hath as much Reason to call this a *self-evident Principle*, as to call his *Proofs* of it *Demonstrations*.

† P. 59, 60.

§. 2. In order to his Demonstration *a Priori*, he lays, † these Four Grounds, which I shall set down in his own Words. First, *That Christian Doctrine was at first unanimously settled by the Apostles, in the Hearts of the Faithful, dispersed in great Multitudes over several Parts of the World.* Secondly, *That this Doctrine was firmly believed by all those Faithful to be the Way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deserting it to be the Way to Damnation: So that the greatest Hopes and Fears imaginable were by engaging the Divine Authority strongly applied to the Minds of the first Believers, encouraging them to the adhering to that Doctrine, and deterring them from relinquishing it; and indeed infinitely greater than any other whatever, springing from any temporal Consideration: And that this was in all Ages the Persuasion of the Faithful.* Thirdly, *That Hopes of Good and Fears of Harm strongly applied, are the Causes of actual Will.* Fourthly, *That the Thing was feasible or within their Power: That what they were bred to was knowable by them.* This put, it follows as certainly, that a great Number or Body of the first Believers, and after faithful in each Age, that is, from Age to Age, would continue to hold themselves, and teach their Children as themselves had been taught, that is, would follow and stick to Tradition, as it doth, that a Cause put actually causing produceth its Effect. This is his Demonstration with the Grounds of it.

§. 3. To shew the Vanity and Weakness of this pretended Demonstration, I shall assail it these Three Ways; by shewing, First, That if the Grounds of it were true they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common Experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. Secondly, That his main Grounds are apparently false.

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Thirdly, That his Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable Instances to the contrary.

S E C T. III.

§. 1. **I**F the Grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common Experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these Two Principles be true, *That the greatest Hopes and Fears are strongly applied to the Minds of all Christians; and that those Hopes and Fears strongly applied are the Cause of actual Will to adhere constantly to Christ's Doctrine;* then from hence it follows, that none that entertain this Doctrine can ever fall from it, because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual Will of adhering constantly to it: For supposing (as he doth) certain and constant Causes of actual Will to adhere to this Doctrine, those who entertain it must actually will to adhere to it, because a Cause put actually causing produceth its Effect, which is constant Adherence to it. And if this were true these Two Things would be impossible; *first*, That any Christian should turn Apostate or Heretick; *Secondly*, That any Christian should live wickedly: Both which not only frequent and undoubted Experience doth evince, but himself must grant, *de facto* to have been.

The First Answer to this Demonstration.

§. 2. *First*, It would be impossible that any Christian should turn Apostate or Heretick. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of Tradition. Now he tells us † *That the first Renouncers of Tradition must have been true Believers or Holders of it e'er they renounced it;* and I suppose there is the same Reason for Apostates. But if all Christians or true Believers (as he calls them) have these Arguments of Hope and Fear strongly applied, and Hope and Fear strongly applied be the Causes of actual Will to adhere to this Doctrine; 'tis necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either Apostates or Hereticks. For if these Causes be put in all the Faithful actually causing (as the Grounds of his Demonstration suppose) and Indefeasibility be the proper and necessary Effect of these Causes, as he also saith, † then it is impossible that where these Causes are put, there should be any Defection: For a proper and necessary Effect cannot but be where the Causes of such an Effect are put, especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently 'tis impossible that any single Christian should ever either totally apostatize or fall into Heresy, *that is*, renounce Tradition.

† P. 60.

† P. 75.

§. 3. And that this is a genuine Consequence from these Principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruine his Demonstration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other Parts of his Discourse. For he tells us, † *That it exceeds all the Power of Nature (abstracting from the Causes of Madness and violent Disease) to blot the Knowledge of this Doctrine out of the Soul of one single Believer;* and † *that since no Man can hold contrary to his Knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing it doth so, it is a manifest Impossibility a whole Age should fall into an Absurdity so inconsistent with the Nature of one single Man.* And, † *That it is perhaps impossible for one single Man to attempt to deceive Posterity by renouncing Tradition.* Which Passages laid together amount to thus much, That it is impossible that Tradition should fail in any one single Person. And though in the Passage last cited he speaks faintly, and with

† P. 54.

† P. 78.

† P. 89.

with a *Perhaps*, as if he apprehended some Danger in speaking too peremptorily, yet any one would easily see the *Last* to be as impossible as any of the rest. And he himself else-where, being in the full Career of his bombast Rhetorick, delivers it roundly without Fear or Wit, † *Sooner may the Sinews of entire Nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her Activity and Motion, that is, her self, than one single Part of that innumerable Multitude which integrate that vast Testification which we call Tradition, can possibly be violated.*

† P. 54.

§. 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and press his Demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the Generality of Christians will always adhere to Tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a Demonstration that would have concluded no more; but this concludes of all as well as of the Generality of Christians. A clear Evidence that it is no Demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, That there can be no Apostates or Hereticks. Besides, supposing his Demonstration to conclude only that the Generality of Christians would always adhere to Tradition, this is as plainly confuted by Experience, if there be any Credit to be given to History. St. Hierom tells us, * That Liberius Bishop of Rome (for all his particular Title to Infallibility built upon Tradition, as Mr. S. speaks, Coroll. 28.) turned Arian. And that * Arianism was establish'd by the Synod of Ariminum, which was a Council more general than that of Trent. And that † almost all the Churches in the whole World under the Names of Peace and of the Emperor were polluted by Communion with the Arians. Again, That * under the Emperor Constantius (Eusebius and Hippatius being Consuls) Infidelity was subscribed under the Names of Unity and Faith. And † that the whole World groaned and wondred to see it self turned Arian. And he † uses this as an Argument to the Luciferians, to receive into the Church those who had been defiled with the Heresy of Arius, because the Number of those who had kept themselves Orthodox was exceeding small: For (says he) the Synod of Nice, which consisted of above Three hundred Bishops, received Eight Arian Bishops whom they might have cast out without any great Loss to the Church; I wonder then how some, and those the Followers of the Nicene Faith, can think that Three Confessors (viz. Athanasius, Hilarius, Eusebius) ought not to do that in Case of Necessity for the Good and Safety of the whole World, which so many and such excellent Persons did voluntarily. It seems Arianism had prevailed very far, when St. Hierom could not name above Three eminent Persons in the Church who had preserved themselves untainted with it. Again, * Arius in Alexandria was at first but one Spark, but because it was not presently extinguish'd, it broke out into a Flame which devour'd the whole World. Gregory Nazianzen † likewise tells us to the same Purpose, That the Arian Heresy seized upon the greatest Part of the Church: And, to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. S's Demonstration of the Indefectibility of the Generality of Christians, he asks, † Where are those that define the Church by Multitude, and despise the little Flock, &c. And this Heresy was of a long Continuance, for from its first Rise, which happened in the 20th Year of Constantine, it continued (as Joh. Abbas † hath calculated it) 266 Years. And the Pelagian Heresy (if we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great Champions of the Church against it) did in a manner prevail as much as Arianism, as the said Author complains in his Preface to his Book, † That almost the whole World was run after Pelagius into Error. Will Mr. S. now say, that in the

* Chron. ad Annum Christ 352.

* Ad An. 363.

† Ad An. 364.

* Advers. Lucifer.

† Ibid.

† Ibid.

* In Epist. ad Galat. l. 3.

† Orat. 20 and 21.

† Orat. 25.

† Chron. ad Annum octavum Mauric.

† Caus. Dei.

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the Height of these Heresies *the Generality of Christians did firmly adhere to Tradition?* If he, say they, did let him answer the exprefs Testimonies produced to the contrary: But if they did not, then his Demonstration also fails as to the *Generality of Christians*. And if the greater Part of Christians may fall off from Tradition, what Demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser to do so? Who will say it is in Reason impossible that a *Thousand* Persons should relinquish Tradition, though *Nine Hundred* of them have already done it, and though the Remainder be no otherwise secured from doing so, than those were who have actually relinquish'd it? Now is not this a clear Evidence that this which he calls a Demonstration *a priori* is no such Thing? Because every Demonstration *a priori* must be from Causes which are *necessary*, whereas his Demonstration is from *voluntary* Causes. So that unless he can prove that *voluntary* Causes are *necessary*, he shall never demonstrate that it is impossible for the Generality of any Company of Men to err, who have every one of them free Will, and are every one of them liable to Passion and Mistake.

§. 5. From all this it appears, that his whole *Discourse* about the Original and Progress of Heresy, and the Multitudes of Hereticks in several Ages, is as clear a Confutation of his own Demonstration as can be desired. The only Thing that he offers in that *Discourse*, to prevent this Objection which he foresaw it liable to, is this, *It is not* (says he †) *to* † P. 64. *be expected but that some Contingencies should have place, where an whole Species in a manner is to be wrought upon; it sufficeth that the Causes to preserve Faith indeficiently entire are as efficacious as those which are laid for the Preservation of Mankind, the Vertue of Faith not being to continue longer than Mankind its only Subject does; and they will easily appear as efficacious as the other, if we consider the Strength of those Causes before explicated, and reflect that they are effectively powerful to make Multitudes daily debar themselves of those Pleasures which are the Causes of Mankinds Propagation; and if we look into History for Experience of what hath passed in the World since the propagating of Christianity, we shall find more Particulars failing in propagating their Kind, than their Faith.* To which I answer,

First, That it may reasonably be expected there should be no Contingencies in any Particulars, where Causes of actual Will are supposed to be put in all; because (as he says truly) *a Cause put actually causing cannot but produce its Effect*. Suppose then constant Causes laid in all Mankind of an actual Will to speak Truth to the best of their Knowledge, were it not reasonable to expect that there would be no such Contingency to the World's End, as that any Man should tell a Lie? Nay, it were Madness for any Man to think any such Contingency should be, supposing Causes actually causing Men always to speak Truth.

Secondly, It is far from Truth, *That the Causes to preserve Faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the Propagation of Mankind*. And whereas he would prove the Strength of these Causes which are laid to preserve Faith, because they are *effectively powerful to make Multitudes daily debar themselves of those Pleasures which are the Causes of Mankinds Propagation*; I hope no Body that hath read the innumerable Complaints which occur in their own Historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own Writers, of more than one Age, concerning the general Viciousness and Debauchery of their Priests and Monks, will be

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over-forward to believe that all those who debar themselves of lawful Marriage, do abstain from those unlawful Pleasures.

§. 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, *That if we look into Histories for Experience of what hath past in the World since the first planting of Christianity, we shall find far more Particulars failing in propagating their Kind, than their Faith.* Do any Histories confirm it to have been the Experience of the World, that the far greatest Part of the World did in any Age give over propagating their Kind? But Histories do confirm that the far greatest Part of the Christian World did fall off to *Arianism* and *Pelagianism*; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce Tradition. Did ever whole Nations and vast Territories of the World either wholly, or for the far greatest Part of them, take up an Humour against propagating Mankind? And yet both History, and the Experience of the present Age assures us, that a great Part of *Asia* and of *Africk* (where the most flourishing Churches in the World once were) are fallen off from *Christianity*, and become either *Mahometans* or *Heathens*. In *Africk* almost all those vast Regions, which Christianity had gained from Heathenism, Mahometanism hath regained from Christianity. All the North Part of *Africk* lying along the *Mediterranean* (where Christianity flourish'd once as much as ever it did at *Rome*) is at this Time utterly void of Christians, excepting a few Towns in the Hands of the European Princes. And not to mention all particular Places, the large Region of *Nubia*, which had (as is thought) from the Apostles Time professed the Christian Faith, hath within these 150 Years, for want of Ministers (as *Alvarez* * tells us) quitted Christianity, and is partly revolted to Heathenism, partly fallen off to Mahometanism. So that it seems, that notwithstanding the *Argument of Hope and Fear*, the very Teachers of Tradition may fail in a largely extended Church. As for *Asia*, in the Easterly Parts of it, there is not now one Christian to Four of what there were 50 Years ago; and in the more Southerly Parts of it (where Christianity had taken deepest Root) the Christians are far inferiour in Number to the Idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have those Christian Nations which are turned Mahometans and Pagans failed in their Faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear Instances of more that have failed in propagating their Kind.

* Hist. Æthiop.

§. 7. But besides those who have totally apostatized from Christianity, hath not the whole *Greek Church*, with the *Jacobites* and *Nestorians*, and all those other *Sects* which agree with and depend upon these, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the *Roman Church*; I say, have not all these renounced Tradition for several Ages? And here in *Europe*, hath not a great Part of *Poland*, *Hungary*, both *Germanies*, *France*, and *Switzerland*; Have not the Kingdoms of *Great Britain*, *Denmark*, *Sweden*, and a considerable Part of *Ireland*, in Mr. S's Opinion, deserted Tradition? If I should once see a whole Nation fail because no body would marry and contribute to the Propagation of Mankind; and should find this sullen Humour to prevail in several Nations, and to over-spread vast Parts of the World, I should then in good Earnest think it possible for Mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other Nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever Cause he assigns of
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Heresy, † as *Pride, Ambition, Lust*, or any other Vice or Interest, if these † P. 67. can take Place in whole Nations, and make them renounce Tradition, then where's the *Efficacy of the Causes to preserve Faith indefinitely entire in any?* For the Demonstration holds as strongly for all Christians as for any.

§. 8. *Secondly*, From these Grounds it would follow that no Christian can live wickedly; because the End of Faith being a good Life, the Arguments of Hope and Fear must in all Reason be as powerful and efficacious Causes of a good Life, as of a true Belief. And that his *Demonstration* proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own Reasoning; for he † argues in this manner, *Good is the proper Object of the Will*; † P. 62. *Good propos'd makes the Will to desire that Good, and consequently the known Means to obtain it: Now infinite Goods and Harms sufficiently propos'd are of their own Nature incomparably more powerful Causes to carry the Will than temporal ones. Since then, when Two Causes are counterpoised, the Lesser, when it comes to Execution, is no Cause as to the Substance of that Effect, it follows that there is no Cause to move the Wills of a World of Believers to be willing to do that which they judge would lose themselves and their Posterity infinite Goods, and bring them infinite Harms, &c. in case a sufficient Proposal or Application be not wanting, which, he tells us, † is not wanting, because Christianity urg-* † P. 63. *ed to Execution, gives its Followers a new Life and a new Nature, than which a nearer Application cannot be imagined.* Doth not this Argument extend to the Lives of Christians, as well as their Belief; so that we may as well infer from these Grounds, that it is impossible that those who profess Christianity should live contrary to it, as that they should fail to deliver down the Doctrine of Christ; because whatever can be an Inducement and Temptation to any Man to contradict this Doctrine by his Practice, may equally prevail upon him to falsify it. For why should Men make any more Scruple of damning themselves and their Posterity by teaching them false Doctrines, than by living wicked Lives? Which are equally pernicious with Heretical Doctrines, not only upon Account of the bad Influence which such Examples of Fathers and Teachers are like to have upon their Scholars, but likewise they are one of the strongest Arguments in the World to persuade them, that their Teachers do not themselves believe that Religion which they teach; for if they did, they would live according to it. Why should any Man think, that those Arguments of Hope and Fear which will not prevail upon the Generality of Christians to make them live holy Lives, should be so necessarily efficacious to make them so much concerned for the preserving of a right Belief? Nay, we have great Reason to believe that such Persons will endeavour as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their Belief to their Lives. And this is the true Source of those Innovations in Faith for which we challenge the Church of *Rome*; which any Man may easily discern, who will but consider how all their new Doctrines are fitted to a secular Interest, and the gratifying of that inordinate Appetite after Riches and Dominion which reigns in the Court of *Rome*, and in the upper Part of the Clergy of that Church.

S E C T. IV.

§. 1. *Secondly*, The main Grounds of his Demonstration are apparent-ly false: For,

First, This Demonstration supposeth that the Generality of Christian Parents

The 2d Answer to his Demonstration.

† P. 63.

Parents in all Ages perfectly understood the Doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any Part of it; that they remembred it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their Children in it; which is as contrary to Experience as that the Generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this Doctrine, and every substantial Part of it, was received and remembred by the Generality of Children as it was taught, and was understood perfectly by them without the least material Mistake: So he tells us, *† That the Substance of Faith comes clad in such plain Matters of Fact, that the most stupid Man living cannot possibly be ignorant of it.* But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined not only from every Man's own Experience of the World, but from a more advantageous Instance of the Experience of the first Age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent Teacher of this Doctrine than our Saviour? And yet his Disciples fell into many Mistakes concerning it: So that in order to the certain propagating of it, the Wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this Doctrine from himself with an infallible Spirit, by which they might be led into all Truth, and secured from Errour and Mistake; which had been unnecessary, had it been impossible for them to mistake this Doctrine. The Apostles, who taught the World by an infallible Spirit, and with infinitely more Advantage than ordinary Parents can teach their Children, yet in all the Churches which they planted they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their Doctrine, as appears by their frequent Complaints in most of their Epistles. Nay, the Apostle chargeth the Generality of the *Hebrews* *† with such a Degree of Dulness and Stupidity, that after sitting Time and Means of Instruction they were still ignorant of the very Principles of Christianity: So he tells them, That when for the Time they ought to be Teachers of others, they had need that one should teach them again which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.* And St. Hierom tells us, *† That the Primitive Churches were tainted with many gross Errors whilst the Apostles were alive, and the Blood of Christ yet warm in Judea.* But it may be there have been better Teachers since, and Children are more apt to learn now than Men were then. Who knows how the World may be changed?

† Heb. 5. 11, 12.

† Adverf. Luciferian.

† P. 75.

* P. 65.

§. 2 Secondly, This Demonstration supposeth the Hopes and Fears which Christian Religion applies to Mens Minds to be certain and necessary Causes of actual Will in Men to adhere to the Doctrine of Christ; and consequently that they must necessarily adhere to it. That he supposeth them to be *necessary*, I have his own Word for it; for he tells *† us, That he hath endeavoured to demonstrate the Indefectibleness of Tradition as the proper and necessary Effect of those Causes which preserve and continue Tradition on foot, and what those Causes are he told us before, * That they are Hopes and Fears strongly applied.* But I hope that the Indefectibleness of Tradition cannot be a *necessary Effect* of the strong Application of those Hopes and Fears, unless those Hopes and Fears be a *necessary Cause* of that Effect. And indeed this is sufficiently implied in his saying *that they are the Causes of actual Will* in Christians to adhere to Tradition. For if these *Causes of actual Will* be constant (as he must suppose) then they are certain and necessary and infallible Causes of adhering to this Doctrine. For whatever is in Act is necessary while it is so, and if it be constantly in Act, the Effect is always necessary. But what a wild Supposition is this, That moral Motives and Arguments working upon a free Principle, the Will of Man,

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Man, do necessarily produce their Effect? Is it necessary that the Hopes of Heaven and the Fears of Hell should keep Christians constant to the Doctrine of Christ? And is it not as necessary that these Arguments should prevail upon them to the Practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonstrate that all Men must be Good who have sufficient Arguments propounded to them, when Experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in Reason impossible that moral Arguments should be of a necessary and infallible Efficacy, because they are always propounded to a free Agent, who may chuse whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reasonable that Men should yield to them, and if they be reasonable they will; but so long as they are free it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if Men be not free, it is no Vertue at all in them to be wrought upon by these Arguments. For what Vertue can it be in any Man to entertain the Christian Doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily, *that is*, whether he will or no, and can no more chuse whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the Light when the Sun shines upon his Eyes, or whether he will hear a Sound when all the Bells in the Town are ringing in his Ears, or (to use Mr. S's † own Similitudes) whether he will feel Heat, Cold, Pain, Pleasure, or any other material Quality that affects his Senses. † P. 53. We see then how unreasonable his Suppositions are, and yet without these Grounds his Demonstration falls: For if it be possible that Christians may mistake or forget the Doctrine of Christ, or any Part of it, or be defective in Diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the Will of Man which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the Arguments of Hope and Fear; then it is possible that Tradition may fail. And is not this a good Demonstration which supports it self upon such Principles as do directly affront the constant Experience, and the clearest Reason of Mankind?

§. 3. And here I cannot but take Notice how inconsistent he is to himself in laying the Grounds of Tradition's Certainty. In one Part of his Book he tells us †, *That Tradition hath for its Basis the best Nature in the Universe, that is, Man's; not according to his moral Part, defectible by reason of original Corruption; nor yet his Intellectuals, darkly groping in the Pursuit of Science, &c. but according to those Faculties in him perfectly and necessarily subject to the Operations and Strokes of Nature, that is, his Eyes, Ears, Handing, and the direct Impressions of Knowledge, as naturally and necessarily issuing from the affecting those Senses, as it is to feel Heat, Cold, Pain, Pleasure, or any other material Quality.* So that according to this Discourse, the Basis of Tradition is not Man's Nature considered as Moral, and capable of Intellectual Reflexion; for in this consideration it is dark and defectible: But Man's Nature considered only as capable of direct sensitive knowledge, as acting naturally and necessarily. Which is to say, That Tradition is founded in the Nature of Man considered not as a Man but a Brute; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it *the best Nature in the Universe*. But now how will he reconcile this Discourse with the Grounds of his Demonstration? where he tells us, That the stability of Tradition is founded in the Arguments of Hope and Fear, the Objects of which being future and at a distance, cannot work upon a man immediately by direct Impressions upon his senses, but must work upon him by way of Intellectual Reflexion and Consideration. For I hope he will not deny but that the Arguments of Hope and Fear

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work upon Man according to his moral and intellectual Part, else how are they Arguments? And if Man according to his *moral Part* be (as he says) *defectible*, how can the *Indefectibility* of Tradition be founded in those Arguments which work upon Man only according to his *moral Part*? I have purposely all along (both for the Reader's Ease and mine own) neglected to take Notice of several of his Inconsistencies; but these are such clear and transparent Contradictions, that I could do no less than make an Example of them.

S E C T. V.

§. 1. **T** *Hiraly*, This Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable *Instances* to the contrary. I will mention but *Two*.

First, The Tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any Doctrine in the World, being short and plain, planted in every Man's Nature, and perfectly suited to the Reason of Mankind. And yet this Tradition, not having past through many Hands (by reason of the long Age of Man) was so defaced and corrupted, that the World did lapse into Polytheism and Idolatry. Now a Man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against Matter of Fact, might by a stronger Demonstration than Mr. S's, prove that though it be certain this Tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail; as *Zeno* demonstrated the Impossibility of Motion against *Diogenes*, walking before his Eyes. For the Doctrine of the one true God was settled in the Heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be the Way to Happiness, and the contradicting or deserting of this to be the Way to Misery. And this Doctrine was by him so taught to his Children, who were encouraged by these Motives to adhere to this Doctrine, and to propagate it to their Children, and were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And this was in all Ages the Persuasion of the Faithful. Now the Hopes of Happiness, and the Fears of Misery strongly applied, are the Causes of actual Will. Besides, the Thing was feasible, or within their Power; that is, what they were bred to was knowable by them, and that much more easily than any other Doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. This put, it follows as certainly that a great Number in each Age would continue to hold themselves, and teach their Children as themselves had been taught, that is, would follow and stick to this Tradition of the one true God, as it doth that a Cause put actually causing produceth its Effect. Actually I say; for since the Cause is put, and the Patient disposed, it follows inevitably that the Cause is put still actually causing. This Demonstration, which concludes an apparent Falshood, hath the whole Strength of Mr. S's, and several Advantages beyond it. For the Doctrine conveyed by this Tradition is the most important, being the first Principle of all Religion; the Danger of corrupting it as great, the Facility of preserving it much greater, than of the Christian Doctrine, for the Causes before-mentioned. And yet, after all, it signifies nothing against certain Experience, and unquestionable Matter of Fact; only it sufficiently shews the Vanity of Mr. S's pretended Demonstration, built upon the same or weaker Grounds.

§. 2. *Secondly*, The other Instance shall be in the Greek Church, who received the Christian Doctrine as entire from the Apostles, and had as great an Obligation to propagate it truly to Posterity, and the same Fears and Hopes strongly applied to be the actual Causes of Will; in a Word, all the

same

same Arguments and Causes to preserve and continue Tradition on foot, which the *Roman Church* had: And yet, to the utter Confusion of Mr. S's Demonstration, Tradition hath failed among them. For as *Speculators*, they deny the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghost from the Son*; and as *Testifiers*, they disown any such Doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent Age, or to any other Age of their Church by the Apostles as the Doctrine of Christ.

6. 3. To this Instance of the *Greek Church*, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of Answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us, * *That the Plea of the Greek Church is Non-Tradition, alledging only this, That their Fathers do not deliver the Doctrine of the Proceſſion of the Holy Ghost; not that they say the contrary, which clearly demonstrates there are no opposite Traditions between them and us.* But this was not the Thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite Traditions between the *Greeks* and the *Latins*, but to secure his main Demonstration of the Impossibility of Tradition's failing against this Instance. For that the *Greeks* have no such Tradition as this, *That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son*, is as good Evidence of the Failure of Tradition as if they had a positive Tradition, *That he proceeds only from the Father*; especially if we consider that they * charge the *Latin Church* with *Innovation* in this Matter, and say that the Addition of that Clause, *of the Proceſſion from the Son also*, is a Corruption of the ancient Faith, and a devilish Invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle so material an Objection (and, I fear, his own Conscience likewise) by a pitiful Evasion instead of a solid Answer? What tho' there be no opposite Traditions between the *Greek* and *Latin Church*, yet if their Faith be opposite, will it not from hence follow that Tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath so very well confuted the Infallibility of Popes and Councils, and thereby undermined the very Foundation of that Religion, should not by the same Light of Reason discover the Fondness of his own Opinion concerning the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath more and greater Absurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to shew Mr. White the Absurdity of it, I will apply his Demonstration of the Infallibility of *Christian Tradition* in general, to the *Greek Church* in particular; by which every one will see that it does as strongly prove the Impossibility of Tradition's failing in the *Greek Church*, as in the *Roman Catholick*, as they are pleased to call it. His Demonstration is this, * *Christ commanded his Apostles to preach to all the World, and lest any one should doubt of the Effect, he sent his Spirit into them to bring to their Remembrance what he had taught them; which Spirit did not only give them a Power to do what he enclined them to, but did cause them actually to do it.* I cannot but take Notice by the way of the ill Consequence of this, which is, that Men may doubt whether those who are to teach the Doctrine of Christ will remember it, and teach it to others, unless they have that extraordinary and efficacious Assistance of the Holy Ghost which the Apostles had: If this be true, his Demonstration is at an end, for he cannot plead that this Assistance hath been continued ever since the Apostles. He proceeds, *The Apostles preached this Doctrine; the Nations understood it, lived according to it, and valued it as that which was necessary to them and their Posterity, incomparably beyond any Thing else.* All this I suppose done to, and by the *Greeks* as well as any other Nation. These Things

* Apology
for Tradition,
P. 51.

* Phoc. Ep. 7.

* De Fid. &
Theol. Tract.
1. Sect. 4.

things being put, it cannot enter into any Man's Understanding, but that the Christian [Greeks] of the first Age, being the Scholars of the Apostles, could and would earnestly commend the Christian Doctrine to their Posterity; if so, it is evident that they did. So that the Continuance of Purity of the Faith in the [Greek] Church is founded upon this, That Fathers always delivered the same Doctrine to their Children which they had received from their Fathers, and did believe it under this very Notion and Title as received; nor could any one [of that Church] deliver another Doctrine under this Title, but he would be convinced of a Lye by the rest; and if the whole [Greek] Church should endeavour to deliver a new Doctrine under that Title, [and there's the same Reason if they should leave out any Article of the old Doctrine] that whole Age would be in their Consciences condemned of Perfidiousness and Paricide. Now this is as impossible, as it is that all Mankind should conspire to kill them-

† Ibid, Sect. 5. selves. And he afterwards † gives the Reason why it is so impossible that Tradition should fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, That if the Tradition of the Christian Faith be more firm than the Course of the Sun and Moon, and the Propagation of Mankind, then God hath shewn himself an unskilful Artificer. What is there in all this Demonstration, which may not be accommodated to the Greek Church with as much Force and Advantage as to the Catholick? Unless he can shew that it is very possible that all the Men in Greece may conspire to kill themselves, but yet absolutely impossible that all the Men in the World should do so; which I am sure he cannot shew, unless he can demonstrate that though it be possible for a Million of as wise Men as any are to be found in the World together, to conspire to do a foolish Action, yet it is impossible that an Hundred Millions not one Jot wiser than the other, should agree together to the doing of it.

§. 4. From all this it appears, That Mr. White's Answer to this Objection doth not signify any Thing to his Purpose. For if the Procession of the Holy Ghost was part of Christ's Doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apostles to the Greek Church; if so, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next Age, and that to the next, and so on; but it seems they have failed. Where then is the Force of Hopes and Fears strongly applied? Where are the certain Causes of actual Will to adhere to this Doctrine? Why is not the Effect produced, the Causes being put actually causing? If the Apostles delivered this Doctrine, Oral Tradition is so clear and unmistakable, and † brings down Faith clad in such plain Matters of Fact, that the most stupid Man living (much less the Greeks, that were the Flower of Mankind) could not possibly be ignorant of it; nay, † it exceeds all the Power of Nature to blot Knowledge thus fix'd out of the Soul of one single Believer, (much more of so vast a Church). And † since no Man can hold contrary to his Knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he did so, 'tis a manifest Impossibility a whole Church should in any Age fall into an Absurdity so inconsistent with the Nature of one single Man. And † since 'tis natural for every Man to speak Truth, and Grace is to perfect Nature in whatever is good in it, it follows that one truly Christian Heart is far more fix'd to Veracity, than others not embu'd with these heavenly Tenets; and consequently that a Multitude of such must incomparably exceed in Point of testifying the same Number of others, unfortified by Christ's Doctrine. And since † such a Thought cannot enter into the most depraved Nature, as to harm another without any Good to himself, and yet this must be if we put Christian Fathers misteaching their Children unreceived Doctrines for received

† P. 53 & 54.

† Ibid.

† P. 78.

† P. 86.

† P. 89.

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ceived (and I hope, for the same Reason, received Doctrines for unreceived) contrary to their Knowledge. For supposing Sanctity in the (Greek) Church, (and why may not we as well as in the Latin) That is, that Multitudes in it make Heaven their first Love, and look on spiritual Goods as their main Concern, &c. it follows, that had the Fathers of that Church, in any Age, consented to mislead their Posterity from what themselves (not only) conceived (but knew) to be true, they should do the most extreme Harm imaginable to others, without any the least Good to themselves; which is perhaps impossible in one single Man, more in few, but infinitely in a Multitude, especially of good Men.

§. 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his ranting Rhetorick (but that I am weary of transcribing it) concerning † *the natural Love of Parents to their Children* (unless we suppose the Greek Church destitute of it) which must needs engage them to use the Means proper to bring them to Heaven, and save them from Hell: As also concerning *the natural Care Men have of not losing their Credit by telling pernicious Lyes*. And, not to omit the best Part of his Demonstration * (which was therefore prudently † P. 90, 91. reserved to the last Place) I might likewise shew how the Principles of each Science, Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Nature, Morality, Historical Prudence, Politicks, Metaphysicks, Divinity, and last of all the new Science of Controversy (as he calls it) or the blessed Art of eternal wrangling and disputing (the first Principle whereof (he tells us) is, *That Tradition is certain*) do all contribute to shew the Certainty of Tradition, that is, the Impossibility that any Part of Christ's Doctrine should fail in the Greek Church any more than in the Latin. And surely Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Natural Philosophy, Metaphysicks, &c. will all stand up for the Greek Church in this Quarrel; for considering that Greece was the Place where the Arts and Sciences were born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best Assistance to the Service of their Country. P. 93.

§. 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to Oral Tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the Head of the Apostles, thought fit to share Scripture and Tradition between these Two Churches, and laying his Left Hand on the Greek Church, and his Right on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great Blessing of Oral Tradition upon the Latin Church? which being to be the Seat of Infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnish'd with this infallible Way of conveying the Christian Doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the Scriptures of the New Testament were left in Greek, so Oral Tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some Shew of Reason: Mr. S. may do well to take the Matter into his deeper Consideration; he hath in his Time improved as weak Probabilities as these into lusty Demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the Force of this Instance of the Greek Church; otherwise (for ought I see) this Instance will hold good against him; and whatever he can say for the Impossibility of Tradition's failing in the Latin Church, may all be said of the Greek Church; if he will but grant that the Apostles preached the same Doctrine to them both; that the Arguments of Hope and Fear which this Doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as the Latins. And yet notwithstanding

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all this, Tradition hath plainly failed in the *Greek Church*. Let him now assign the Age wherein so vast a Number of Men conspired to leave out the *Article* of the *Procession of the Holy Ghost*, and shew how it was possible a whole Age could conspire together to damn their Posterity, or how the Faith of immediate Fore-fathers might be altered without any such Conspiracy, and we are ready to satisfy him how the Doctrine of the *Latin Church* might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what Age it was done. And until he do this, I would entreat him to trouble us no more with those canting Questions (wherein yet the whole Force of his Demonstration lies) How is it possible a whole Age should conspire to change the Doctrine of their Fore-fathers? And in what Age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his Demonstration, to assign the particular Age wherein the *Latin Church* conspired to change the ancient Doctrine; with the same Reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his Demonstration, to name the particular Age wherein the *Greek Church* conspired to alter the Doctrine of Christ, (which was undoubtedly in the first Age truly delivered to them by the Apostles) and also to shew from the rational Force and Strength of Tradition, how it is more impossible for the *whole Church* to have failed in transmitting the Doctrine of Christ down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a Multitude of Christians as is the vast Body of the *Greek Church*. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise, I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call *Demonstrations* better, they must shortly either quit their Reason, or their Religion; or else return to the honest old *Mumpsimus* of the Infallibility of the Church from an extraordinary and immediate Assistance of the Holy Ghost; or (to make the Business short, and stop all Gaps with one Bush) come over to the *Jesuits*, and acknowledge the *Pope's Infallibility* both in Matters of Faith and Fact; by which Means they may reconcile themselves to him, and prevent that direful Stroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the Body of the *Traditionary Church*. And thus I have done with his *First Demonstration*; and I take it for a good Sign that the Popish Cause is at a very low Ebb, when such Stuff as this must be called *Demonstration*.

S E C T. VI.

Mr. S's Demonstration
a posteriori.

§. 1. I Come now to his *Demonstration a posteriori*, which, although it fall of it self if the *Demonstration a priori* fail, yet because it hath some peculiar Absurdities of its own, I shall consider it by it self as well as with Relation to the other.

§. 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the Grounds of it, according to his usual Fashion, he premiseth something as yielded by Protestants, which, in his Sense, no Protestant ever granted. Just so he dealt with us before concerning the Scriptures, saying, That by them the Protestants must mean *unsensed Letters and Characters*. But let us see what it is. † That this *Demonstration a posteriori* seems a needless Endeavour against the Protestants, who yield that those Points in which we agree, as the Trinity, Incarnation, &c. came down by this way of Tradition; And this (he saith) no Protestant ever denied. And then he asks, Whether

† P. 76.

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the same Virtue of Tradition would not have been as powerful to bring down other Points in which we do not agree, had any such been? Now if he speak any thing to his own Purpose, he must suppose Protestants to yield, that all those Points wherein we are agreed, were conveyed down to us solely by Oral Tradition without writing: But this all Protestants deny. So that That only, which would avail his Cause against us, is to shew, that those Points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by Oral teaching, but that they are likewise contained in Scripture, without which, we say, we can have no sufficient Certainty and Assurance at this Distance, that they were the Doctrine of Christ, and that they were not either totally innovated, or else corrupted in the Conveyance from what they were at first. And if he can shew this concerning any Point in Difference, I promise to yield it to him.

§. 3. I come now to his *Demonstration*, which I shall set down in his own Words, with the *Principles* upon which it relies. † *The Effect then we* † P. 77, 78. *will pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of such a Cause, is the present Persuasion of Traditionary Christians (or Catholicks) that their Faith hath descended from Christ and his Apostles uninterruptedly, which we find most firmly rooted in their Heart; and the Existence of this Persuasion we affirm to be impossible, without the Existence of Tradition's ever Indeficiency to beget it. To prove this, I lay this first Principle; That Age which holds her Faith thus delivered from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles had changed or innovated therein. The second Principle shall be this: No Age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to Posterity as received from Christ by continual Succession. The Sum of which is this, That because a present Multitude of Christians (viz. the Roman Church) are persuaded, that Christ's Doctrine hath descended to them solely by an uninterrupted Oral Tradition, therefore this Persuasion is an Effect which cannot be attributed to any other Cause but the Indeficiency of Oral Tradition. For if neither the present Age, nor any Age before, could make any Change or Innovation, then the Persuasion of the present Age is a plain Demonstration that this Doctrine was always the same, and consequently that Tradition cannot fail.*

§. 4. In answer to this, I shall endeavour to make good these *Four things*.

First, That these *Principles* wholly rely upon the Truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonstration a priori*.

Secondly, That these *Principles* are not sufficiently proved by him.

Thirdly, That *Doctrines* and *Practices*, which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same Pretence to uninterrupted Tradition.

Fourthly, That it is not the present Persuasion of the Church of Rome (whom he calls the Traditionary Christians) nor ever was, that their Faith hath descended to them solely by Oral Tradition. If I can now make good these *Four things*, I hope his *Demonstration* is at an end.

S E C T. VII.

§. 1. **T**HAT these *Principles* wholly rely upon the Truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonstration a priori*. For if the Doc-
The First Answer to his second Demonstration.

ctrine of Christ was either imperfectly taught in any Age, or mistaken by the Learners, or any Part of it forgotten (as it seems the whole. *Greek Church* have forgot that fundamental Point of the *Procession of the Holy Ghost*, as the *Roman Church* accounts it) or if the Arguments of Hope and Fear be not necessary Causes of actual Will to adhere to Tradition, then there may have been Changes and Innovations in any Age, and yet Men may pretend to have followed Tradition. But I have shewn, that Ignorance, and Negligence, and Mistake, and Pride, and Lust, and Ambition, and any other Vice or Interest, may hinder those Causes from being effectual to preserve Tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected that those Persons who innovate and change the Doctrine, should acknowledge that their new Doctrines are contrary to the Doctrine of Christ; but that they should at first advance them as pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general Entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very Doctrines which Christ delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their Power to burn all that shall deny it.

§. 2. I will give a clear Instance of the Possibility of this in the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the Ninth or Tenth Age after Christ. We will suppose then that about this Time, when universal Ignorance, and the genuine Daughter of it, (call her Devotion or Superstition) had over-spread the World, and the Generality of People were strongly inclined to believe strange Things; and even the greatest Contradictions were recommended to them under the Notion of Mysteries, being told by their Priests and Guides, that the more contradictory any thing is to Reason, the greater Merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that in this State of things, one or more of the most eminent then in the Church, either out of Design, or out of superstitious Ignorance and Mistake of the Sense of our Saviour's Words used in the Consecration of the Sacrament, should advance this new Doctrine, That the Words of Consecration, *This is my Body*, are not to be understood by any kind of Trope (as the like Forms in Scripture are, as *I am the Vine*, *I am the Door*, which are plain Tropes) but being used about this great Mystery of the Sacrament, ought in all Reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable Mystery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real Change of the Substance of Bread and Wine, made by vertue of these Words in the real Body and Blood of our Saviour. And in all this, I suppose nothing but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual for Men, either out of Ignorance or Interest, to advance new Opinions in Religion. And such a Doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious Clergy of that Time, as a probable Means to draw in the People to a greater Veneration of them; which Advantage Mr. *Rushworth* † seems to be very sensible of, when he tells us, That the Power of the Priest in this Particular is *such a Privilege, as if all the learned Clerks that ever lived since the Beginning of the World should have studied to raise, advance, and magnify some one State of Men to the highest Pitch of Reverence and Eminency, they could never (without special Light from Heaven) have thought of any thing comparable to this*. I am of his Mind, that it was a very notable Device, but (I am apt to think) invented *without any special Light from Heaven*. Nor was such a Doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the People in an Age prodigiously ignorant, and strongly inclined to Superstition, and thereby

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thereby well prepared to receive the grossest Absurdities under the Notion of Mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a greater Honour and Reverence to the Sacrament. Now supposing such a Doctrine as this, so fitted to the Humour and Temper of the Age, to be once asserted, either by Chance, or out of Design, it would take like Wild-fire; especially if by some one or more who bore Sway in the Church, it were but recommended with convenient Gravity and Solemnity. And although Mr. *Rushworth* says, * It is impossible that the Authority of one Man should sway so much in the World, because (says he) *surely the Devil himself would rather help the Church, than permit so little Pride among Men*; yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning Reason: For though he delivers it confidently, and with a *surely*, yet I make some Doubt whether the Devil would be so forward to help the Church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he would rather chuse to connive at this humble and obsequious Temper in Men, in order to the Overthrow of Religion, than cross a Design so dear to him by unseasonable Temptations to Pride: So that notwithstanding Mr. *Rushworth's* Reason, it seems very likely that such a Doctrine, in such an Age, might easily be propagated by the Influence and Authority of one or a few great Persons in the Church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive Temper of superstitious Ignorance, than to entertain such a Doctrine with all imaginable Greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable Zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make Objections against it as if this Doctrine were new and full of Contradictions, they may easily be born down by the Stream, and by the Eminency, and Authority, and pretended Sanctity of those who are the Heads of this Innovation. And when this Doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as Hereticks, then it is seasonable to maintain that this Doctrine was the Doctrine of Fore-fathers; to which End it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend Two or Three Sayings of the Ancients to that Purpose. And as for the Contradictions contained in this Doctrine, it was but telling the People then (as they do in Effect now) that Contradictions ought to be no Scruple in the way of Faith; that the more impossible any thing is, 'tis the fitter to be believed; that it is not praise-worthy to believe plain Possibilities, but this is the Gallantry and heroical Power of Faith, this is the way to oblige God Almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and down-right Contradictions: For God requires at the Peoples Hands (as Mr. *Rushworth* † tells us) *a Credulity of things above and beyond Nature; nay, beyond all the Fables, be it spoken with Respect, that ever Man invented.* After this Doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and by the most inhumane Severities and Cruelties suppressed Dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then, if they please, even this new Word *Transubstantiation* may pretend also to Antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a Word used by Christians in all Ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the Doctrine of the Sacrament as a *Term of Art* appendant to it. And when a superstitious Church and designing Governours have once gained this Post, and by means of this enormous Article of *Transubstantiation* have sufficiently debauched the Minds of Men, and made a Breach in their Understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any Error, though never so gross and senseless; then Innovations come in again, and by Sholes; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is for

* Dial. 3.
Sect. 7.

† Dial. 1.
Sect. 4.

for that very Reason the more proper Matter for an Article of Faith. And if any of these Innovations be objected against, as contrary to former Belief and Practice, it is but putting forth a lusty Act of Faith, and believing another Contradiction, that though they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§. 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is agreeable both to History and Experience. For that the Ninth and Tenth Ages, and those which followed them till the Reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous Consent of all Histories; and even by those Writers, that have been the greatest Pillars of their own Religion. And Experience tells us, that in what Age soever there are a great Company of superstitious People, there will never be wanting a few crafty Fellows to make use of this easy and pliable Humour to their own Ends. Now that this was the State of those Ages of the Church, will be evident to any from these Testimonies. *Platina*

† In Vit. Roman, Papæ 117. A. C. 900.

† writes of Pope *Romanus*, that he null'd the Acts of his Predecessor *Stephanus*. For (says he) *these Popes minded nothing else but how they might extinguish both the Name and Dignity of their Predecessors*. And if so, who can doubt, but that these Popes who made it their Business to destroy the very Memory of their Ancestors, would be very little careful to preserve the Doctrine of Fore-fathers. But what the Care of those Times was in this Particular, may be conjectured from what *Onuphrius*

* In *Platin.*

* says by way of Confutation of that Passage in *Platina*, concerning Pope *Joan's* reading publickly at Rome at her first coming thither. This (says he) is utterly false, for there was nothing that they were less solicitous about in those Times, than to furnish the City with any publick Teachers. And the Time which *Onuphrius* speaks of, was much about the Beginning of the

* Anno 506.

Tenth Century. *Phil. Burgomensis* * says, It happened in that Age, through the Slothfulness of Men, that there was a general Decay of Vertue both

† Anno 908.

in the Head and Members. Again, † These Times, through the Ambition and cruel Tyranny of the Popes, were extremely unhappy — For the Popes setting aside the Fear of God and his Worship, fell into such Enmities among themselves

† Ennead. 9. L. 1. Anno 900.

as cruel Tyrants exercise towards one another. *Sabellicus* † says, It is wonderful to observe what a strange Forgetfulness of all Arts did about this time seize upon Men; insomuch that neither the Popes, nor other Princes, seem'd to have any Sense or Apprehension of any thing that might be useful to humane Life. There were no wholesome Laws, no Reparations of Churches, no Pursuit of liberal Arts; but a kind of Stupidity, and Madness, and Forgetfulness of Manners had possessed the Minds of Men. And a little after, I cannot (says he) but much wonder from whence these tragical Examples of Popes should spring; and how their Minds should come to be so devoid of all Piety, as neither to regard the Person which they sustained, nor the Place they were in. *Sigonius* † speaking of these Times, about the Beginning of the Tenth Century, calls them the foulest and blackest, both in respect of the Wickedness of Princes, and the Madness of the People, that are to be found in all Antiquity. *Genebrard*

† De Regn. Ital. L. 6.

† speaking of the same Time, This (says he) is called the unhappy Age; being destitute of Men eminent for Wit and Learning, as also of famous Princes and Popes. In this Time there was scarce any thing done worthy to be remembered by Posterity. And he adds afterwards, But chiefly unhappy in

† Chron. L. 4.

this one thing, that for almost 150 Years together, about 50 Popes did utterly degenerate from the Vertue of their Ancestors. He should have added farther, but even to a Miracle happy in another Respect, that during this long and total Degeneracy from the Piety and Vertue of their Ancestors, they

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they did not in the least swerve from them in Matter of Faith and Doctrine: A thing incredible, were there not *Demonstration* for it. *Werner* * gives this Character of that Time; *About the Year of our Lord One* * Fascic. Tempor. *Thousand there began an effeminate Time, in which the Christian Faith began to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient Vigour; inso-* much that in many Countries of Christendom, neither Sacraments nor Ecclesiastical Rites were observed—And People were given to Soothsaying and Witchcrafts, and the Priest was like the People. It seems by this Testimony that Tradition did falter a little in that Age, else the Christian Faith could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much: And (which threatens Mr. S's Demonstration most of all) that the Practical Tradition of Sacraments, and other Ecclesiastical Observances, did fail in many Christian Countries. *Gerbert*, * who lived in that Time, gives this * Epist. 40. short Character of the Roman Church, in an Epistle of his to Stephen Deacon of that Church, *The World stands amazed at the Manners of Rome.* But most full is the Complaint of a great Prelate of the Church † concerning those Times; *In the West* (says he) *and almost all the World over* † Bell. Sac. l. i. c. 8. *(especially among those who were called the Faithful) Faith failed, and there was no Fear of God among them: (It seems the Argument of Fear had lost its Force) Justice was perished from among Men, and Violence prevailing against Equity governed the Nations. Fraud, Deceit, and the Arts of Couzenage were grown universal. All kind of Vertue gave way as an useless thing, and Wickedness supply'd its Place. The World seemed to be declining apace towards its Evening, and the second coming of the Son of Man to draw near: For Love was grown cold, and Faith was not found upon Earth. All things were in Confusion, and the World looked as if it would return to its old Chaos—All sorts of Fornication were committed with the same Freedom as if they had been lawful Actions; for Men neither blushed at them, nor were punish'd for them—Nor did the Clergy live better than the People—For the Bishops were grown negligent of the Duty of their Place, &c. In a Word, Men ran themselves headlong into all Vice, and all Flesh had corrupted its way. And farther, to shew the great Neglect of Priests and Bishops in the Work of teaching and instructing (which is so necessary to the preserving of Tradition inviolable) I will add the Testimony of one † who lived in † Elfric. Ser. ad Sacerdot. those Times; who tells us, *That in those Days the Priests and Bishops, who ought to have been the Pillars of the Church, were so negligent that they did not mind the Divine Scripture; nor take any Care to teach and instruct Scholars that might succeed them, as we read holy Men had used to do, who left many Scholars perfectly instructed to be their Successors. If they had only neglected the Scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it seems they took no Care to instruct People in the way of Oral Tradition, nor to furnish the Church with a new Generation of able Teachers, who might deliver down from Hand to Hand the Sense and Faith of Fore-fathers.* This last Testimony the late learned Lord Primate of Ireland, Bishop *Usher* (in his Book *de Christian. Eccles. Success. &c.* † where several of the Testi- † C. 2 and 3. monies I have produced, with many more to the same Purpose, may be seen) cites out of a *M. S.* in *Bennet College Library* in *Cambridge*; concerning the Authority of which *M. S.* there need be no Dispute between Mr. S. and me; because the whole Force and Effect of this Testimony is sufficiently contained in those Citations which I have brought out of publick and unquestionable Books.*

§. 4. All these Testimonies which I have produced are, in general and for the Substance of them, confirmed by *Two* of the greatest Props of the *Romish Church*. *Bellarmino* and *Baronius*. *Bellarmino* † says of this Tenth Age, *That there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy*. *Baronius* * speaks more particularly, *What was then the Face of the Roman Church? How deformed? When Whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief Sway at Rome; and at their Pleasure changed Sees, appointed Bishops, and (which it is horrible to mention) did thrust into St. Peter's See their own Gallants, false Popes, who would not have been mentioned in the Catalogue of the Roman Popes, but only for the more distinct recording of so long a Succession of Times*. And a little after, *Christ was then (it seems) in a very deep Sleep — And which was worse; when the Lord was thus asleep there were no Disciples to awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep*. What kind of Cardinal Presbyters and Deacons can we think were chosen by these Monsters, when nothing is so natural as for every one to propagate his own Likeness? It is very much that these lewd Women, and their Favourite-Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops, who then swayed the Church, should, when they were so careless of their own Souls, be so tender of the Salvation of Posterity; and when they administered all other Affairs of the Church so extravagantly, should be so careful of the *main* Chance, as to transmit the Christian Doctrine entire and uncorrupted to succeeding Ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonstrated this *a posteriori*, which seems so very strange to a Man that considers things *a priori*.

† De Rom.
Pontif. L. 4.
c. 12.
* Ann. Tom.
19. An. 900.

§. 5. But it may be this dismal State of the *Roman Church* lasted but a little while; and she did in the same Age, before Tradition could be interrupted, recover her self out of this degenerate Condition. I will therefore enquire a little into the State of succeeding Times. And I find in the Thirteenth Century St. Bernard † complaining, That the Degeneracy of the Priests was in his Days greater than ever; *We cannot (says he) now say, as is the People so is the Priest; for the People are not so bad as their Priests*. In the Fifteenth Century, *Nic. de Clemangis*, who lived in that Time, wrote a Book upon this Argument, *Of the corrupt State of the Church*; by which we may make some Judgment whether in that Age it was (as Mr. S. says) impossible but that the Christian Doctrine should be entirely preserved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He says † there was an universal Degeneracy in the Church from the very Head of it to its lowest Members. In the same Chapter he complains, *Who is there that preaches the Gospel to the People? Who shews them the way to Salvation either by Word or Action?* It seems there was a great Failure both of Oral and Practical Tradition. Again, † speaking of the Pope's taking to himself the Collation of all vacant Bishopricks and Dignities; he says, one might think the Pope did this, *that the Church might be provided of worthier Governours, both in respect of their Learning and their Lives, did not the thing it self declare the contrary; and that ignorant and useless Persons (provided they had Money) were by Simony advanced to the highest Degrees in the Church*. And † speaking what a vast Number of Candidates there was usually at Rome from all Parts waiting for Benefices and Dignities, he tells us, *That many of these did not come from their Studies, or from Schools of Learning, to govern Parishes; but from the Plow, and from the meanest Professions: And that they understood Latin and Arabick much at the same rate; and many of them could not read at all*. But it may be (says he) their Manners were such as might be some

† In Convers.
Sancti Pauli
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† C. 3.

† C. 5.

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excuse for their Ignorance. No; though their Learning was but little, their Vertue was less; for being brought up in Idleness, they followed nothing but Debauchery and Sports, &c. Hence it comes to pass, that in all Places there are so many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant Priests. — Hence it is that Priests are so contemned by the common People. — Formerly the Priesthood was highly honoured by the People, and nothing was more venerable than that Order of Men; but now nothing is more vile and despicable. — * I make no doubt, but there are now more Thieves and Robbers, than true Pastors in the Church. — * Why should any Man now flatter himself with hopes of Preferment, because of his Vertue or Learning? Men do not now (as formerly) rise in the Church by such Arts — * Which of those that are now adays advanced to the Pontifical Dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or heard, or learnt the Scriptures; yea, or ever touched any more than the cover of the Bible? Again *, speaking of the prodigious Covetousness of the Governors of the Church, and the gross neglect of their Flocks, They would (says he) much more contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand Souls, than of ten or twelve Shillings. But why do I say more contentedly? When without the least trouble or disturbance to themselves, they can bear the loss of Souls; a thing so far from their care, that it never entered into their thoughts. Had the Hereticks of those Days but had Wit enough, and a little Money, they might (it seems) for a small Sum have hired the Governors of the Church to have renounced Tradition, or to have ceased to propagate it; though they had known that in so doing they should have damned all their Posterity. He goes on, and tells us, That if there were perhaps any one who did not take these courses, the rest would all snarl at him, call him Fool, and say he was unfit to be a Priest. — So that the study of the Scriptures (together with the Professors of it) was turned into laughter and scorn by all; but (which is prodigious) especially by the Popes, who prefer their own Traditions many Degrees before the Commands of God. I desire Mr. S. to take notice in what kind of times Tradition was set up against Scripture. Again *, speaking of the choice of Persons to be Priests, he tells us, That there was no Enquiry made into their Lives, no Question about their Manners: As for their Learning (says he) what need I speak of that? When we see the Priests, almost universally, have much ado to Read, though but in an hesitating and spelling Fashion, drawing out one Syllable after another, without understanding either the Sense of what they Read, or the Words. I am now reconciled to oral Tradition, and convinced that there was great need of it in those Ages in which scarce any of the Priests could either Write or Read. I omit the particulars of what he says * concerning the common Drunkenness and Incontinency of Priests, who (because they made Conscience of Marriage) kept Whores in their Houses; concerning the dissolute Lives of Monks; and concerning Nunneries, which instead of being the Sanctuaries of God, were the abominable Stews of Venus, and the Receptacles of lascivious young Men; insomuch (says he) that at this Day it is the same thing to put a Virgin into a Nunnery, and to make her a common Strumpet. And to shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but with Relation to the general Corruption of that Age, he adds *, That wickedness did so abound in all Orders of Men, that scarce one among a thousand was to be found who did truly live up to his Profession: And if there was any one that did not follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to others; and was branded either as an insolent singular Mad-man or an Hypocrite. I will conclude this long Testimony with the character which he gives * of one of the Popes of his time, Clement by Name, viz. That he did chiefly apply himself to

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gratifie and oblige all the Parasites and Buffoons that had any interest in the several Courts of Princes : And to this End, did confer upon these, and upon handsome young Boys (which he much delighted in) almost all the vacant Bishopricks, and most of the other Church Dignities. It is well that Oral Tradition hath the security of Infallibility, otherwise it had in all Probability been lost among this lewd sort of People, which yet they gravely call the Holy Roman-Catholick Church.

* Exomolog.
C. 68.

† Ibid.

§. 6. To this effect I might have produced Testimonies concerning every Age from the Ninth to the Sixteenth ; but Mr. Cressy hath saved me that Labour, who Acknowledges *, that *these worst Times of the Church, when Ignorance, Worldliness, Pride, Tyranny, &c. reigned with so much Scope; When the Popes (so wicked, so abominable in their Lives) enjoyed so unlimited a Power even over secular Princes themselves, and much more over the Clergy* : I say, he Acknowledges that these worst Times continued during the space of about six Ages before Luther : A competent Time (one would think) for Tradition to have miscarried in, were it not (as Mr. S. says) *indefectible*. Mr. Cressy indeed tells us †, That this was to him an *irrefragable Testimony of a strange watchfulness of Divine Providence over the Church, to preserve it from the Gates of Hell (that is, established and dangerous Errors) during these worst Times*. And very likely it is that this might appear so to such a Catholick whose Judgment, he tells us, *it is to renounce his own Judgment* : But it will never appear *irrefragable*, to any Man that hath his Judgment about him, unless Mr. Cressy can Prove, that by that Phrase, *viz. the Gates of Hell*, the Scripture does not mean gross Wickedness of Life, as well as *dangerous errors* in Opinion ; and likewise, that a general vitiousness and Debauchery of Manners is not as pernicious to Christianity, and as destructive to the end of it, as *establish'd Errors* in Doctrine. And if so, that the Providence of God is not equally concerned to preserve the Church from things equally Pernicious. When he hath proved these three Things, then this Declamatory discourse of his may signifie something, but not before.

§. 7. Now if this be a true Representation of the State of the Roman Church in those Ages, was not this a very fit Time for the Devil to play his Pranks in ? Will any Man that Reads these Testimonies, think it impossible that the Doctrine of Christ should have been depraved in this Age ; or that the most Senseless and absurd Tenets might then be brought in under the Notion of Christian Doctrines ? When scarce any one knew what the Doctrine of Christ was : When a general Ignorance of Letters, and almost an universal stupidity and madness had seized upon the Minds of Men : When there was a horrid Depravation of Manners, and a general failure of Vertue and Piety both in the Head and Members of the Church : When the Lives of the Popes were Tragically Wicked, and no footsteps of Piety appeared in them : When for about 150 Years together, in a continued Succession of 50 Popes, there was scarce one Pious and vertuous Man (or Woman) sat in that Chair : When the Whores governed Rome, and put out and put in Bishops at their Pleasure ; and made their own Gallants Popes, who would be sure to make a College of Cardinals of such Monsters as themselves : When pretty Boys, and Parasites, and Buffoons, led the Head of the Church by the Nose, and were gratified with the Best Bishopricks and Dignities in the Church : When there was a general decay of Knowledge, and defection of the Christian Faith :

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When in many Countries neither Sacraments, nor other Ecclesiastical Rites were observed: When Violence and Fraud, and all the Arts of Deceit and Couzenage, and blacker Arts than these, were the common Study and Practice: When Intemperance, and all kind of Lewdness and Debauchery, reigned in all Sorts and Orders of Men: When the Generality of Bishops and Priests (who, according to Mr. *Rusworth*, † can † Dial. 3. only teach the Traditionary Doctrine) were ignorant in the Scriptures Sect. 3. and in every thing else (very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the People, and to breed up any in Knowledge to succeed them in their Office; and in the Lewdness of their Lives did surpass the vilest of the People. Was not such an Age a fit Season to plant the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what Weeds would not have grown in so rank a Soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the Church then should be ignorant of the Doctrine of Christ, when scarce any one would take the Pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood and fewer practised it? When prodigious Impiety and Wickedness did overspread the Church from the Pope down to the meanest of the Laity, can any one believe that Men generally made Conscience to instruct their Children in the true Faith of Christ? Was it impossible there should be any Neglect of this Duty, when all others failed? That there should be any Mistake about the Doctrine of Christ, when there was so much Ignorance? unless he be of Mr. *Rusworth's* † Mind, who † Dial. 3. reckons Ignorance among the Parents of Religion. Where were then the Sect. 7. Arguments of Hope and Fear? Were they strongly applied, or were they not? Were they Causes of actual Will in Christians to believe well, when they lived so ill? Or is Christianity only fitted to form Mens Minds to a right Belief, but of no Efficacy to govern their Lives? Hath Christ taken Care to keep his Church from Error, but not from Vice? As the great Cardinal *Perron* † (stooping below his own Wit and Reason to † Reply to serve a bad Cause) tells us, *That the Church sings, and will sing to the End K. James. of the World, I am black, but I am fair; that is to say, I am black in Man- L. 4. C. 6. ners, but fair in Doctrine*: As if the Meaning of the Prophecies and Promises of Scripture made to the Church were this, that by the extraordinary Care of God's Providence, and peculiar Assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be wicked, but orthodox to the End of the World. Where were then the vigorous Causes imprinting Christ's Doctrine; and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else; and of securing that See and its supreme Pastor in the Faith and Practice of the Christian Doctrine, above any other See or Pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in History, as not to understand the dismal State of Religion in the *Romish* Church in those Times? Who does not know what Advantages the Bishops of Rome, and their servile Clergy, made of the Ignorance and Superstition of those and the succeeding Ages; and by what Arts and Steps they raised themselves to that Power which they held in the Church for a long while after? When they could tread upon the Necks of Princes, and make a great King walk bare-foot, and yield himself to be scourged by a Company of petulant Monks: When they could send any Man upon an Errand to visit the Holy Sepulchre, or the Shrine of such a Saint; and command Five or Six Kings with great Armies upon a needless Expedition into the Holy Land, that so during

their Absence they might play their own Game the better : When they could mint Miracles, and impose upon the Belief of the People (without the Authority of any ancient Books) absurd and counterfeit Tales of ancient Saints and Martyrs, as delivered down to them by *Tradition*; and could bring that foppish Book the *Legend* almost into equal Authority and Veneration with the *Bible*; and persuade the easy People that *St. Denys* carried his own Head in his Hand, after it was cut off, Two Miles, and kiss'd it when he laid it down. Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous Practices of the *Roman* Bishops and Clergy in these Ages, the strange Feats they played, and what Absurdities they imposed upon the superstitious Credulity of Princes and People, may readily imagine not only the Possibility, but the Easiness of innovating new Doctrines as they pleased, under the specious Pretences of Antiquity, and constant and uninterrupted Tradition.

† Apology
for Tradition,
on, P. 49.

§. 8. And this kind of Discourse concerning the Possibility of Errors coming into the Church, is not, as Mr. *White* ridiculously compares it, † as if an Orator should go about to persuade People, that *George*, by the Help of a long Staff and a nimble Cast of his Body, and such like Advantages, might leap over Paul's Steeple; never considering all the while the Disproportion of all these Advantages to the Height of the Steeple : So (saith he) he that discourseth at large how Errors use to slide into Man's Life, without comparing the Power of the Causes of Error to the Strength of resisting, which consists in this Principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by Tradition, &c. says no more towards proving an Error's over-running the Church, than the Orator for *George's* leaping over the Steeple. How vain is this? When it appears from this Instance that I have given of the State of the *Roman* Church in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries, and afterwards, that the Causes of Error were infinitely stronger than the Power of Resistance. The great Causes of Error are Ignorance and Vice; where Ignorance reigns, there's no Power; where Vice, no Will to resist it. And how great the Ignorance and Viciousness of all Orders of Men in the *Roman* Church was, is too too apparent from the Testimonies I have brought. Where was the Strength of resisting Error, when for 150 Years together the Popes were the vilest of Men, Bishops and Priests overwhelmed with Ignorance, abandoned to all manner of Vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the People? In such a degenerate State of a Church what Strength is there in this Principle, *Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by Tradition*? When those, who ought to teach Men what that Doctrine is which was derived to them by Tradition, are generally careless of their Duty, and ignorant themselves what that Doctrine is; when they addict themselves wholly to the satisfying their Ambition, and other Lusts, and carrying on Designs of Gain, and getting Dominion over the People; What can hinder Men so disposed from corrupting the Doctrine of Christ, and suiting it to their own Lusts and Interests? And what shall hinder the People from embracing those Corruptions? when by the Negligence of their Pastors to instruct them, and not only so, but also by their being deprived of the Scriptures in a known Tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true Doctrine of Christ is. So that in an Age of such profound Ignorance and Vice, and general Neglect of Instruction, 'tis so far from being impossible for Errors to over-run a Church, that the contrary is morally impossible; and *George's* long Staff, and advantageous Cast
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of his Body, are more powerful Causes to enable him to leap over Paul's Steeple, than this Principle, *That nothing is to be admitted but what descends by Tradition*, is to keep Errors out of a Church in an ignorant and vitious Age; when few or none are either able or willing to instruct Men in the Truth. For suppose this always to have been the Principle of Christians, *viz. That nothing is to be admitted as the Doctrine of Christ, but what is descended to them by Tradition*; How shall this Principle secure the Church from Heresy any more than this, *viz. That nothing but Truth is to be assented to*, doth secure Men from Error? Or more than this, *viz. That no Man is to do any thing but what is wise and vertuous*, does secure the Generality of Mankind from Folly and Vice?

S E C T. VIII.

§. 1. **S**Econdly, The Principles upon which this Demonstration relies are not sufficiently proved by him. The second Answer to his second Demonstration.

His first Principle is this, *That Age, which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles had changed or innovated any thing therein.* This Proposition (he tells us) needs no Proof to evidence it, but only an Explication: For since no Man can hold contrary to his Knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or innovate in the Case proposed without knowing he did so; 'tis a manifest Impossibility a whole Age should fall into an Absurdity so inconsistent with the Nature of one single Man. But (by his Favour) that which he says is no Proof, but only an Explication, is a Proof if it be any thing; and the Force of it is this: That which is inconsistent with the Nature of one single Man, is manifestly impossible to a whole Age; but it is inconsistent with the Nature of any single Man to hold contrary to his Knowledge, &c. therefore impossible to a whole Age; and consequently, *that Age which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing, nor, &c.* So that in order to the making good of this first Principle, Mr. S. hath left nothing unproved but only this Proposition, *namely, That it is impossible that any one single Man that holds his Faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the Apostles, should ever himself have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles hath changed or innovated any thing therein:* And to make out the Truth of this Proposition, there only remains this to be proved, *viz. That it is impossible for any single Man to be mistaken:* For if that be possible, then contrary to Mr. S. a Man may hold that to have been delivered as a Doctrine of Faith from the Apostles which was not so delivered.

§. 2 His second Principle is this, *That no Age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to Posterity as received from Christ by continual Succession.* He proves it thus; Since Man is a rational Creature, he must have some Reason or Motive good or bad, which he proposeth to himself as an End to be atchieved by his action: And whatever his remote End is, his immediate End, in telling Posterity a late invented thing was held immediately before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore since a seen Impossibility cannot be a Motive to one not frantick; and since 'tis evidently impossible they should make Posterity believe a thing so universally known to be false, as this must needs be, &c. it is as impossible this Principle should falter, as that the foregoing Age should conspire to act without a Motive, or that the succeeding Age

Age should believe what they know to be otherwise, that is, should hold both Sides of a Contradiction in a clear Matter of Fact. The Force of which is this, That it is impossible that any Man not frantick should attempt to innovate in Matter of Christian Doctrine, because the immediate End of such an Attempt must be to have his new Doctrine believed; but it is impossible he should attain this End, and impossible he should not see that it is impossible to attain it: Now a seen Impossibility is an End that cannot move any one that is not frantick; therefore no Man that is not frantick can attempt to innovate in Matter of Christian Doctrine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible that there should be any Hereticks, if a Heretick be one that attempts to innovate in Matter of Christian Doctrine: For if there be any such Attempters they must be frantick, and if they be frantick they can be no Hereticks; for Heresy implies a Crime, but God will not impute the Actions of mad Men to them as Faults. Again, suppose he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I hope Mr. S. will grant that a Heretick is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Christ's Doctrine to be really so, though indeed it be not; why should such a Person think it impossible to make Men believe that to be received from Christ which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was so? And if this be granted, then it is not impossible that *Man, though he be a rational Creature,* may attempt to innovate. And if so, then his *second Principle* is not proved. If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble Science of Controversy (whereof he pretends to be so great a Master) he would not bring such trifling Sophisms instead of demonstrative Proofs: And nothing less than a demonstrative Proof will serve to establish any Principle upon which a Demonstration is to be built.

S E C T. IX.

The Third
Answer to
Mr. S's se-
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stration.

§. I. **D**Octrines and Practices which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same Pretence to uninterrupted Tradition. And of this I shall give several Instances; one among the *Jews*, the rest among *Christians*.

† Antiq. Jud.
l. 13. c. 18.

1. I shall instance among the *Traditionary Jews*, whose Perswasion in our Saviour's Time was, and still is, that their Oral Doctrine, which they call their *Cabala*, hath descended to them from *Moses* uninterruptedly. Now here is the *Existence of such a Perswasion*, as Mr. S. affirms to be *impossible without Tradition's ever-indeficiency to beget it*. And this Perswasion of theirs is most exactly parallel with the Pretensions of the *Romish Church* according to Mr. S. For here's a Multitude of *Traditionary Jews*, manifoldly greater in proportion to the Dissenters in that Church, than the *Romish Church* is in comparison to those *Christians* that dissent from her. *Josephus* tells us, † That the richer Sort were of the Perswasion of the *Sadducees*, but the Multitude were on the *Pharisees Side*. So that the *Pharisees* had this Mark of the true Church (as *Bellarmino* calls it) common to them with the Church of *Rome*, that they were the greatest Number, and so they continue to this very Day; insomuch that although they do not call themselves the *Catholicks*, yet I am sure they call all *Jews* that do dissent from them *Schismatics*. Now that the *Sadducees* were for the written Law against Oral Tradition, is, I confess, no Credit to us; but that our Saviour reprov'd the *Traditionary Doctrines and Practices of the Pharisees*, because by them they made void the

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the written Law, is much more to the discredit of the Asserters of Oral Tradition. Both *Romanists* and *Pharisees* they own alike a *written Doctrine*, but then they both pretend the true Sense and Explication thereof to have descended to them by *Oral Tradition*. For just as the *Traditionary Christians* do now, so *Josephus*, tells † us the *Traditionary Jews* of † *Idid. l. 17. c. 3. & de Bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12. † Antiq. l. 18. c. 2.* Old, the *Pharisees*, did pretend by their *Oral Tradition* to interpret the Law more accurately and exactly than any other Sect. In like manner he † tells us, That all things, that belonged to Prayer and Divine Worship, were regulated and administered according to their Interpretations of the Law. And they both agree in this, to make void the Word of God by their Tradition; which the *Pharisees* did no otherwise than Mr. S. does, by equaling *Oral Tradition* to *Scripture*; nay preferring it above *Scripture*, in making it the sole Rule of Faith, and interpreting the *Scripture* according to it. Hence are those common sayings in the *Talmud*, and other Jewish Books: Do not think that the written Law is the Foundation, but that the Law Orally delivered is the right Foundation; which is to say with Mr. S. that not the *Scripture*, but *Oral Tradition* is the true Rule of Faith. Again, There is more in the Words of the Scribes (*viz.* the Testifiers of Tradition) than in the Words of the written Law. Again, The Oral Law excels the Written, as much as the Soul doth the Body; which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, That the *Scripture* without Tradition is but a dead Letter, destitute of Life and Sense. Hence also it is that they required the People (as the *Traditionary Church* does now) to yield up themselves to the Dictates of Tradition even in the most absurd Things, as appears by that common saying among them, If the Scribes say that the right hand is the left, and the left the right (that Bread is Flesh, and Wine is Blood) hearken to them, that is, make no scruple of whatsoever they deliver as Tradition, though never so contrary to Reason or Sense. And lastly, The Doctrines of the *Pharisees* were many of them *Practical*; such were all those which concerned external Rites and Observances, as washing of Hands and Cups, &c. So that these *Pharisaical* Traditions had also that unspeakable advantage which Mr. S. says renders their Traditions *unmistakeable*, That they were daily practised, and came down clad in such plain matters of Fact, that the most stupid Man living could not possibly be ignorant of them. Therefore, according to Mr. S's Principles, it was impossible that any Age of the *Jews* should be persuaded that these things were commanded by *Moses* and ever since observed, if they had not been so: And yet our *Saviour* denies these Customs to have been of any such Authority as they pretended.

§. 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to shew the agreement which is between the *Traditionary Jews* and *Papists*, their own Writers so liberally acknowledging it. Mr. White * indeed says, That the Faith of the *Jews* was not delivered to them Orally, but by Writing; than which nothing can be more inconsistent with his Hypothesis. For if the Jewish Faith was conveyed to them not Orally, but by Writing, then either the Jewish Church had no sufficient Rule of Faith, or else a Writing may be such a Rule. But other of their Champions make great use of the Parallel, between the *Traditionary Jews* and the *Romish Church*, to confirm from thence their own *Traditionary Doctrines*. Cardinal Perron hath a full Passage to this Purpose; As this (says he †) is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the Majesty of the ancient Mosaick Scripture, to believe and observe not only all the things which are therein actually contained, † *Rep. to R. James, observ. 3. c. 4.*

but also those things which are therein contained mediately and relatively, as the Doctrines of Paradise, &c. which were not contained therein but mediately, and by the Authority which it gave to the Deposition of the Patriarchal and Mosaick Tradition, preserved by Heart, and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue; So this is to preserve a sound and entire Respect to the Majesty of the Apostolical Scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it contains, not only immediately and by it self but mediately and by reference to the Apostolical Traditions, to which in gross and generally it gives the Authority of Apostolical Doctrines, and to the Church the Authority of Guardian and Depositary to preserve and attest them. *Vossin* in his Observations upon *Raymundus Martyn*, † tells us, That as in the Old Law the great Consistory at Jerusalem was the Foundation of the true Tradition, so (says he) the See of Rome is the Foundation of our Tradition. And as the continual Succession of the High Priests and Fathers among the Jews was the great Confirmation of the Truth of their Traditions, so (says he) with us the Truth of our Catholick Doctrine is confirmed by a continual Succession of Popes.

† *Pugio Fid.*
P. 145.

§. 3. From all this it appears, that the Pharisees among the Jews made the same pretence to Oral Tradition which the Papists do at this Day according to Mr. S. And if so, then Mr. S's Demonstration *a Posteriori* is every whit as strong for the Jews against our Saviour, as it is for the Papists against the Protestants. For we find that in our Saviour's time, it was then the present persuasion of the Traditionary Jews, that their Faith, and their Rites, and the true Sense and Interpretation of their written Law was descended from Moses and the Prophets to them uninterruptedly; which we find was most firmly rooted in their Hearts. But the Jews had constant Tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal Prince: And though the Letters of the Prophecies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering Condition of our Saviour; yet they did infallibly know that their Messiah was to be another kind of Person, from Sense written in their Hearts, from the interpretation of those Prophecies Orally brought down to them from the Patriarchal and Mosaick Tradition preserved by Heart and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue, and from the living Voice of their Church essential, that is the universal Consent of the then Traditionary Jews. If it be said, That the Jewish Tradition did indeed bring down several Doctrines not contained in Scripture, of Paradise, of Hell, of the last Judgment, of the Resurrection, &c. (as Cardinal Perron affirms) but it did not bring down this Point of the Messiah's being a Temporal Prince: Then as Mr. S. † asks us, so the Jew does him; By what virtue Tradition brought down these other Points? and whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring down this as well as those? Then he will ask him farther, Is there not a necessary Connexion and Relation between a constant Cause, and its formal Effect? So that if its formal Effect be Points received as delivered ever; the proper Cause must be an ever-delivery; whence he will argue from such an Effect to its Cause for any particular Point, and consequently for this Point that is in Controversie between Jews and Christians, concerning the Messiah's being a Temporal Prince, in case it be a Point held ever delivered; but most certain it is, it was so held by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and hath been held so ever since to this Day.

† P. 76.

I shall not trouble the Reader with transcribing the rest of this Demonstration, only desire him as he reads it over, to imagine instead of Mr. S.

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S. a *Pharisee*, demonstrating against one of *Christ's* Disciples the Infallibility of the *Oral Tradition* of the *Jews*: And I doubt not but he will find this *Demonstration*, and every part of it (changing only the Names) as forcibly concluding *Christ* not to be the *Messiah*, as it doth infer any point of *Popery* against the *Protestants*.

§. 4. Before I leave this *Instance* of the *Jewish Tradition*, I shall briefly † *Apol. 123.* consider what Mr. *White* † hath offered by way of answer to it; as, &c.
First, That the matter of these Traditions is nothing else but *Explications of Scripture framed and invented by their own Rabbines*. So we say, that the *Popish Traditions* are *Innovations*. But then Mr. *White*, and Mr. *S.* tell us, That they can demonstrate them to be descended from *Christ*, and his *Apostles*, because it is the present *Perswasion* of a multitude of *Christians* that they are so descended. In like manner, if this *Demonstration* be good, the *Jews* can prove their Traditions to be descended from *Moses* and the *Prophets*. *Secondly*, He says, that the *Form of these Traditions is more Ridiculous than the Canting of Gypsies, or the Juggling of Hocus-pocus, because it consists in inventing the Sense of the Scripture from the Mysteries, and Numbers, and Changes of Letters*. This is a gross inexcusable Mistake. For though the *Jews* have such a *Cabbala* (call'd *Gemetry*) as this which Mr. *White* describes; yet that *Cabbala* which is argued in this *Instance*, and which our Saviour reproves in the *Pharisees* by the Name of *Tradition*, is quite another thing, and among the *Jewish Writers* known by the Name of the *Unwritten or Oral Law*; which they say was delivered to *Moses* on Mount *Sinai* and by him conveyed to *Aaron* and *Joshua*, and the *Elders*, and successively delivered down from one Age to another; and at last by *Rabbi Jehudah* compiled into one Volume which they call *Mishna*, or *divine laws*. And this does not consist in the Art of *Numbering, Combining, or changing of Letters*, as Mr. *White* imagines. But suppose it did so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be; the *Instance* would be so much the more *Conclusive* against them, if what they affirm be true, That *Oral Tradition* is infallible, and that the *perswasion* of a *Traditionary Church* in any Age, that such a *Doctrine* descended to them from *Christ* or *Moses*, be a demonstration that it did so: For if this be sufficient Evidence, 'tis nothing to the purpose what the *Doctrine* be either for *Matter* or *Form*; For if it be once demonstrated to have come from *Christ* or *Moses*, it is without any farther dispute to be received as of *Divine Authority*. So that Mr. *White* quite alters the state of the Question; which was not whether the *Jewish Cabbala* be absurd and ridiculous, but whether the general *perswasion* of the *Jews* in any Age, that it descended to them by uninterrupted Tradition from *Moses*, be a demonstration that it did so. If it be, then the *Jewish Cabbala* is as demonstratively of *Divine Authority* as the *Oral Doctrine* of the *Papists*. *Thirdly*, He says, *This Cabbala was a Doctrine delivered to few, and that with strict Charge to keep it from Publicity, and so communicate it again successively to a select Committee of a few, wherein (says he) you may see as fair an Opportunity for Juggling and Cozenage, as in our Case there is an Impossibility*. This I think is true of the *Cabbala*, which (it seems) Mr. *White* had only in his view, but is a horrible mistake if he speak of the *Oral Law* which was contained in the *Mishna*, and which this *Instance* only intends. For of this *Maimonides* † says expressly, *That in every Age, from the time of Moses* † *In Prefat.* *to Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the Mishna, the Oral Law was publicly taught*: Sum. Tal. mud.
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And that after Rabbi Jehudah had compiled it into one Volume, the Israelites did generally write out Copies of it, and it was every where carefully taught, for fear lest the Oral Law should by forgetfulness be lost among the Jews. So that upon account of the publickness of the Doctrine, there is as great an impossibility of Juggling and Cozenage in the case of the Jewish as of the Romish Tradition. Besides, was washing of Hands and Cups, which they also pretended to have come down to them from Moses, and to have been constantly practised in every Age, a secret thing? Was it not a *practical* Tradition, and performed in a sensible matter? If therefore no Age can conspire to impose upon the next in a plain Custom; and if an universal Tradition of such a thing cannot come in without such a Conspiracy: How could this be the perswasion of any Age, that washing of Hands, &c. was prescribed by Moses and practised in all Ages, if it had not truly been so?

§. 5. Secondly, As for Instances among Christians, whereof many remain yet upon Record; as namely, the various and opposite Traditions about the time of Easter, and concerning the Baptism of Hereticks; and the Apostolical Tradition (as St. Austin calls it) concerning the Admission of Infants to the Communion; all which have been frequently urged in this Controversie, and none of them yet sufficiently answered; I shall to avoid tediousness, passing by these, insist only upon that of the Chiliasm; which in Justin Martyr's time was the perswasion of all Orthodox Christians, that is (in Mr. S's Dialect) of all the holders to Tradition. For if notwithstanding the perswasion of that Age, that this Doctrine was descended to them from the Apostles, it was not really so descended; then the perswasion of Christians in any Age, that a Doctrine was brought down to them from the Apostles, is no Demonstration that it was so.

§. 6. To this Instance Mr. White answers † by telling us, that Eusebius says that this Tradition sprang from Papias, (a good but a credulous and simple Man) who it seems was mistaken in saying that it was the Apostle's Doctrine. But for all this, Justin Martyr says it was received by all Orthodox Christians in his Time, as a Doctrine descended to them from the Apostles. And if Justin said true, nothing can make more against their Demonstration of the Infallibility of Tradition, than the natural Consequence from these two Sayings of Eusebius and Justin, which is this, That the mistake of one simple and credulous Man may in an Age or two give occasion to the universal Entertainment of a Doctrine, as descended down to them from Christ and his Apostles, when there was no such Matter. Hath not Mr. White now done his Rule of Faith great Service by this Answer? But it is according to his manner in all his Writings, to say any thing to remove a present Objection, though never so much to the prejudice of his main Hypothesis; than which I do not know any quality in a Writer which doth more certainly betray the want either of Judgment, or of Sincerity, or of a good Cause.

§. 7. And whereas he says †, That Irenæus his Testimony proves it to be no Tradition; for he sets down the supposed Words of our Saviour which plainly shews it is a Story, not a Tradition; a Tradition being a sense delivered not in set Words, but settled in the Auditors Hearts by Hundreds of different

† Apol. p. 79. &c.

† Apol. p. 81.

different Expressions explicating the same Meaning. When I consider this Passage of Mr. White, I confess I cannot complement him, and say (as he makes his Nephew do in the Dialogue † between them) *I cannot but* † *Rushworth, Dial. 4. Sect. 4.*
applaud your Discourse, it hath so pleasing and attractive a Countenance. And † *Ib. Sect. 5.*
 again, † *I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty Objection, your Arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comely and winning a Complexion, &c.* I cannot (I say) speak all this of his present Argument; but I may deservedly apply to it the last Part of his Nephew's Complement, That it is an Argument so framed, *as if, without any Evidence of its Consequence, it would persuade Men to believe it.* But to return an Answer to this Passage: It seems (according to Mr. White) that *Irenæus* was mistaken in the very Nature of Tradition: And if so learned a Father was ignorant in the common Rule of Faith, what can we (to use Mr. S's Words *) *undertakingly promise to weaker Heads?* Mr. S. instanceth * P. 39.
 in the Creed and Ten Commandments as the principal Traditions which Parents teach their Children; but now Mr. White can shew plainly that these are no Traditions but Stories, because Tradition is a Sense delivered not in set Words, &c. As if Christ and his Apostles could deliver no Doctrine unless they expressed the same thing an hundred several ways. But suppose they did so (which no Man hath any Reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by an hundred) can no Man deliver this Tradition who speaks it in any one of those Expressions? If one should employ a Servant to carry a Message, and (because Mr. White thinks this necessary) should settle the Meaning of it in his Heart, by telling him the same thing in an hundred several Expressions; and the Servant should go and deliver this Message in one of those very Expressions that his Master used to him, and should say these were his Master's very Words; would not this be well enough?

No, if he had come to such a Philosopher as Mr. White, he would soon have given him to understand that he was not fit to bring a Message, or to be credited in it, who had so little Wit as not to know that a Message is a thing not to be delivered in set Words. And now I would entreat Mr. White to reconcile himself in this Matter to his Friends. Mr. Rushworth says, * *'Tis impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same* * Dial. 1.
Sense in divers Words: Which, if it be true, I would fain know what cer- Sect. 6.
 tain Course Mr. White can prescribe to explicate the same Meaning by hundreds of different Expressions, and consequently how Tradition can be infallibly conveyed, by settling the Sense of it in the Auditors Hearts, by such Variety of Expressions. Mr. Cressy * likewise (a zealous Assertor of Tra- * Exomolog.
 dition) does affirm, *That the primitive Churches were even to Excess scrupulous in maintaining the very Phrases of Traditionary Doctrines; which* c. 10. Sect. 4:
(according to Mr. White) plainly shews these Doctrines to be Stories, not Traditions; because Tradition is a Sense delivered not in set Words. The same Author complains, * *That few among their learnedst Masters of Controver-* * Ibid, c. 19.
sy, propose the Points to be disputed between them and the Protestants in the Sect. 2.
Language of the Church. By which, I suppose, he does not mean, that these Controvertists were to blame in that they did not settle the Sense of these Points by hundreds of different Expressions explicating the same Meaning, but that they did not keep to the Words wherein the Church had in Councils, or otherwise (if there be any other way) declared her Sense of those Points. Again he * says, *That St. Paul, referring to the Doctrine* * Ibid, c. 27.
settled Sect. 2.

* Ibid, c. 28.
Sect. 1.

settled by Oral Instruction, to shew the Uniformity of it every where, calls it a *Form of wholesome Words*. From whence we may conclude either that St. Paul did not well to call the Traditionary Doctrine (as Mr. Cressy says he does) a *Form of Words*, or else (which is more probable) that Mr. White is mistaken in saying, That a Tradition is a Sense not delivered in set Words. Farthermore, the same Mr. Cressy * tells us, That St. Augustine was careful not only to deliver Traditional Truths themselves, but the Terms also in which those Truths were conveyed to his Times. But now Mr. White could have informed St. Augustine, that this officious Care of his was not only superfluous, but pernicious to Tradition.

† Dial. cum
Tryph. p. 306.
Edit. Lutet.
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§. 8. But to return to Justin's Testimony; to which the Sum of Mr. White's Answer is, That Justin esteem'd it not as a Point necessary to Salvation, but rather a Piece of Learning higher than the common; since he both acknowledges other Catholicks held the contrary, and entitles those of his Perswasion *καὶ πάντα ἐπερρωμένους*, right in all Opinions, that is, wholly of his own Mind. It is not material to my Purpose, whether or no Justin look'd upon this as a Point necessary to Salvation, so long as it is evident that he looked upon it as a Divine Revelation, and Part of the Christian Doctrine. And yet, it seems, he thought it a Point of more than ordinary Importance, because he joins it with the Doctrine of the Resurrection, and says that it was not disowned by any but those who also denied the Resurrection. But whereas Mr. White says that Justin acknowledges other Catholicks to have held the contrary, I hope to make it evident, from the Scope and Series of his Discourse, that he acknowledges no such thing; but that the plain Design of his Discourse is to shew, that this Doctrine was owned by all true Christians. For when Trypho asks him, † Whether the Christians did indeed believe that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, &c. he returns him this Answer, *I am not such a Wretch as to speak otherwise than I think. I have told thee before that my self and many others (as ye all know) are of the Mind that this will come to pass. But, many indeed of those Christians who are [not] of the pure and pious Perswasion do not own this, I have intimated to thee.* That the negative Particle (though omitted in the Copy) ought to be thus inserted, will be clear to any one that considers what follows: For after he had spoken of those who disown this Doctrine, he immediately adds, by way of farther Description of them, that tho' they are called Christians, yet in Truth they are not Christians, in these Words: *For of these (viz. the Disowners of this Doctrine) who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical and impious Hereticks, I have shewed thee that they teach in all Points blasphemous, atheistical and absurd things. But that ye may know that I do not say this for you only, I will, according to my Ability, (compile all these Discourses which have past between us into one Piece; in which I will by writing make Profession of this very thing which I now declare to you. For I do not choose to follow Men or the Doctrines of Men, but God and such Doctrines as are from him. And though ye may have conversed with some who are called Christians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who also say that there is no Resurrection of the Dead, but that so soon as they die their Souls are received into Heaven: Do not count these Men Christians; no more than a Man, that considers things rightly, would own the Sadduces, and such like Sects, to be Jews, &c. But I my self, and as many Christians as are thoroughly of the right Perswasion, do both know that there shall*

shall be a Resurrection of the Flesh, and a Thousand Years in Jerusalem which shall be built, adorned and enlarged, &c. Can any thing be plainer than that Justin endeavours by this Discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this Point they were speaking of was a *Divine Doctrine*, and owned to be so by all Christians; except such as did only bear the Name and Title of Christians, but were indeed blasphemous Hereticks and Deniers of the Resurrection? By which Character that he intends to describe the impious Sects of the *Gnosticks*, will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the *negative Particle* (which Mr. Mede* proves to have been omitted in the Copy) or else acknowledge that those who are Christians only in Name, but in truth are impious, blasphemous and absurd Hereticks, may properly be said to be of the pure and pious Opinion of the Christians. And if only these be the other Catholicks, whom Mr. White says Justin acknowledges to have held contrary to the *Millennaries*, I am contented he should make his belt of them. If Mr. White should blame the inserting of the *negative Particle* [not] into Justin's Text, as too great a Boldness with the *Fathers*; it were easily answered; that the Sense evidently requires it: And in such a Case it is no Boldness, but such a Liberty as the most Learned of their own Interpreters and Commentators upon the *Fathers* do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes Offence at this, one may with Reason (since the Exigency of the Sense plainly requires the inserting of it) demand of him (what he * unreasonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative Propositions of Scripture) to demonstrate that the Particle [not] was not left out of this Clause of Justin by those who transcribed the Book. But besides the Exigency of the Sense in this Place, that the *Negative* ought to have been inserted, will appear by the Reference which Justin makes in this Passage to something foregoing in the same Dialogue. I have (says he) declared to thee before, that my self and many others are of the Mind that this will come to pass. But, that many indeed of those Christians who are [not] of the pure and pious Perswasion do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For of these, who are called indeed Christians, but are atheistical and impious Hereticks, I have shewed thee that they teach in all Points blasphemous, atheistical, and absurd things. In these Words he plainly refers to some precedent Passage, which, if it can be found, will be a certain Key to open to us the Sense of this Place. I know that Mr. Mede* (perhaps not observing it) thought that Passage to have been fraudulently expunged by the Enemies of the *Millenary Opinion*: But it seems to me to be still extant; for I find towards the Beginning of this Dialogue, after that Justin had endeavoured to prove at large out of Scripture this glorious coming of Christ, and to refute those who applied the *texts* produced by him to that Purpose to *Hezekiah*, and to *Solomon*, whose falling off to Idolatry he occasionally mentions; whereupon Trypho objects to him, that many who were called Christians, did also communicate in the Idol-Feasts. To this, I say, I find Justin returning to this Answer: † First, He denies not that there are such as these who own themselves Christians, and confess the crucified Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, and yet teach not his Doctrines, but the Doctrines of seducing Spirits. But, says he, We who are the Disciples of the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus Christ, are from this very thing the more strengthened in our Faith, and become more confirmed in the Hope which by him hath been declared to us. For now we see those things visibly and effectually accomplish'd which he before-hand told us would be done in his Name. For he said, Many shall come in my

Nov. Edit.
p. 664.

P. 31.

Ibid.

† P. 253.

my Name, &c. By which Hope any one that reads the Antecedents and Consequents, will plainly see that Justin means the Hope of the Millennium (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the Resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict Connexion with the Doctrine of the Millennium, because (as he tells us afterwards) this Doctrine was denied by none but such as also denied the Resurrection. And of these Men his Description runs on in these Words, πολλοί, &c. Many (saith he) both are and have been, that have come in the Name of Jesus, and taught both to speak and do atheistical and blasphemous things; and are by us denominated from those Men from whom each of their Doctrines and Opinions had its Rise (namely, as it follows, Marcionites, Valentinians, &c.) and all these in their several ways teach Men to blaspheme the Creator of the Universe, and the Christ, whose Coming was foretold by him, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But we have no Communion with them, as knowing them to be atheistical and impious, &c. This Passage in hand, when I compare it with the Text before quoted, and consider the Words and Characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in those Words, I have declared to thee, I have intimated to thee, &c. If so, the Matter in controversy is clear, that the Doctrine of the Millennium was universal: If it be not the same, I could wish to be shew'd some other Place in this Dialogue where Justin makes any such Declaration or Intimation. In the mean while, by comparison of these Places, it is evident there are but Two sorts of Men that Justin speaks of. First, Who believe the Millennium; We the Disciples * of the true and pure Doctrine, &c. viz. My self and many others; again, My self and as many Christians as are thoroughly * of the right Perswasion. Secondly, Who deny the Millennium; Many Christians, saith Justin: But what Christians? Of a right Perswasion. That, saith he, I have signified before. τῶν Ἰδ, &c. For I have shewed thee of them who are called Christians, but are indeed Atheists and impious Hereticks, that they teach blasphemous, and atheistical, and absurd things: And true it is, he did shew before, that those who denied the Millennium were many in number, and were called Christians, &c. but were Teachers of blasphemous and atheistical things, &c. and known to be Atheists and impious, &c. But he shewed it of none other besides these: So that if this Doctrine were likewise denied by many Christians of the pure and pious Perswasion, then Justin Martyr had foully forgot himself; but if not, then it is plain that the Transcribers have wronged Justin, by leaving out a Negative which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing by the way how Mr. White pleases himself with false and frivolous Criticisms upon the Words πολλοί and ὁρδογνώμους. False they are, as Mr. White shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are render'd by my preceding Discourse; for which Reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as Mr. S. * warily suggests) not to engage himself, nor be hook'd by others, out of his own infallible way, but leave it wholly to the * bird-witted Hereticks (as Mr. S. calls them) to perch upon the specifical Natures of Words, as he does of Things.

* ἡ ἀληθινή
καὶ καθαρή
ἡ διδασκαλία.
* ὁρδογνώ-
μους.

* P. 68.

* P. 69.

§. 9. Besides these Instances I have given of Doctrines and Practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief Points of Popery, and shew, that for all their Pretence to Tradition, they are really Innovations. But because this would engage me in tedious Disputes about particular Points, I will only single out one of

of their most fundamental *Doctrines*, viz. that of *Transubstantiation*; concerning which I shall shew that, notwithstanding it is the universal Perswasion of the present *Roman Church*, yet they have not, nor can have any Assurance that it was the Doctrine of Christ, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted Tradition. I shall not at all contend against the Word *Transubstantiation* (which is generally acknowledged to be new) but only the thing signified by it, a substantial change of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. And this I might shew at large not to have been the Doctrine of the ancient *Fathers*. But because Mr. *White*, and Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Cressy* do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a Traditionary Doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publickly held by any Catholic who continued afterwards uncensured, and in the Communion of the Church: Therefore I shall content my self at present with one clear *Testimony*, and that of a very eminent *Person* in the Church, St. *Theodoret*, concerning whom Pope *Leo* (in an Epistle to him, at the end of *Theodoret's Works*) gives this Testimony, That in the Judgment of the Apostolick See he was free from all stain of Heresie. The Passage I intend is in his *Dialogues*, between a Catholic under the Name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eranistes* who sustained the Person of an Heretick. *Eranistes* * maintaining that the Body of Christ was changed into the substance of the Divinity, he illustrates it by this Similitude. As (says he) the Symbols of the Lord's Body and Blood are one thing before the Invocation of the Priest; but after the Invocation, are changed and do become another thing: So the Body of our Lord, after his Ascension, is changed into the Divine Substance. To which *Orthodoxus* returns this answer, Thou art caught in thine own Net. Because the mystical Symbols after Consecration do not pass out of their own Nature; for they remain in their former Substance, Figure and Appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before. He does not only in express Words deny the Substance of the Symbols to be changed, but the occasion upon which these Words are brought in, and the scope of them (if they be of any force against the Heretick's Illustration) renders them incapable of any other Sense. When Mr. S. hath answered this Testimony, I have more for him.

* Dialog. 2.

That which I mainly urge against this *Doctrine* is, the monstrous Absurdities and Contradictions contained in it, together with the necessary Consequence of them. Several of the Absurdities of it are well brought together by *Scorus* *, who tells us, That to prove the possibility of Christ's Body being contained under the species of Bread and Wine, many things must be proved which seem to involve a Contradiction; as

* Distinct. I. 4. diff. 10. qu. 1.

1. That one quantum (or extended Body) may be together in the very same Place with another.
2. That a less quantum may be together in the same Place with a greater; i. e. a Body of less extension may occupy not only the same, but as much Room as a Body of greater Extension does; which is to say no more but this, that a Body less than another may be as great as that other even whilst it is less than it.
3. That a greater quantum may be together with every part of a less quantum, i. e. a Body that is greater than another, may be as little as the least part of that other Body which is less than it.
4. That a Subject may be without quantity, i. e. there may be a Body which hath no kind of Magnitude.
5. That a Body may be somewhere where it was not before without changing its Place, i. e. a Body may be removed to another Place, whilst it remains still in the same Place.
6. That a quantum may be without any quantitative Mode, i. e.

a Body may be extended without any manner of Extension. *The possibility of all which, he saith (and I am very much of his mind) it would be too tedious a Work to prove; and therefore he only attempts to prove the two last, which (in all Reason) is Work enough for one Man. All these seeming Contradictions (as he modestly calls them) are by his own Acknowledgment involved in this Doctrine. To these I might add many more; as, How a thing can be said to be changed into another thing which did exist before? How a Body can be present in a Place after the manner of a Spirit? And yet this they affirm concerning the presence of Christ's Body in the Sacrament; one might as well say that Snow is black, but not after the manner of blackness, but in the way of whiteness, which is to talk Non-sense after the manner of Sense: How the whole Body of Christ can be contained under the least sensible part of the Species of Bread, as is generally affirmed: Nay, and Scotus* † adds, that the whole Body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he says expressly, *That the Head and the Foot of the Body of Christ are as far distant from one another in the Sacrament, as they are in Heaven: as if one should say that a Body, all whose Parts lie within the Compass of a small Pins-head, may yet within that little Compass have Parts two Yards distant from one another: And lastly, how the sensible species of Bread, e. g. quantity, whiteness, softness, &c. can exist without any Subject? To affirm the possibility of which (as generally they do) is to say that there may be quantities of white and soft Nothings; For this is the plain English of that Assertion, that sensible Species may exist without a Subject; which being strip'd of those Terms of Art (Species and Subject) that do a little disguise it, it appears to be plain Non-sense.*

† Ibid. qu. 1.
n. 12.

† Exomol.
c. 73. Sect. 7.

Now the proper and necessary consequence of this Doctrine is to take away all certainty, and especially the certainty of Sense: For if that which my Sight and Taste and Touch do all assure me to be a little piece of Wafer, may notwithstanding this be Flesh and Blood, even the whole Body of a Man; then notwithstanding the greatest assurance that Sense can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what Sense reported it to be. If so, then farewell the *Infallibility* of Tradition, which depends upon the certainty of Sense: And which is a worse Consequence, if this Doctrine be admitted we can have no sufficient Assurance that the Christian Doctrine is a Divine Revelation. For the Assurance of that depending upon the Assurance we have of the Miracles said to be wrought for the Confirmation of it, and all the Assurance we can have of a Miracle depending upon the certainty of our Senses; it is very plain that *that* Doctrine which takes away the certainty of Sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of Christian Religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a Man may be assured that such a Doctrine is revealed by God, and consequently true, which if it be true, a Man can have no Assurance at all of any Divine Revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a Wonder that any Man who considers the natural Consequences of this Doctrine can be a Papist; unless he have attained to Mr. Cressy's pitch of Learning, who speaking of the difficult Arguments wherewith this Doctrine was pressed, says † plainly, *I must answer freely and ingenuously, that I have not learned to answer such Arguments, but to despise them.* And if this be a good way, when ever we have a mind to believe any thing, to scorn those Objections against it which we cannot solve

solve; then Christian Religion hath no Advantage above the vilest Enthusiasms; and a Turk may maintain Mahomet and his *Alcoran* (in opposition to Christ and his Doctrine) against all that Grotius, or any other hath said, if he can but keep his Countenance, and gravely say, *I have not learned to Answer such Arguments, but to despise them.*

§. 10. I will add one Instance more in another kind, to shew the uncertainty of Oral and Practical Traditions, and that shall be the Tradition concerning Pope Joan; than which scarce any was ever more generally received in the Historical kind. Many and great Authors affirm it, as Testifiers of the general Fame. None ever denied it till the Reformers had made use of it to the disadvantage of Popery. Since that time not only Papists deny it, but several of our own Writers cease to believe it. Phil. Bergomensis tells the Story thus: Anno 858. John the 7th. Pope, &c. The Tradition is that this Person was a Woman, &c. Here's an Oral Tradition. He concludes thus; In detestation of whose filthiness, and to perpetuate the Memory of her Name, the Popes even to this Day going on Procession with the People and the Clergy, when they come to the Place of her Travel, &c. in token of Abomination they turn from it, and go a by-way; and being past that detestable Place, they return into the way, and finish their Procession, Here is one Practical Tradition. And for avoiding of the like Miscarriages, it was decreed that no one should thereafter be admitted into St. Peter's Chair priusquam per foratam sedem futuri Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacono Cardinale attrectarentur: Here is another with a Witness: † Sabellicus relates the same; and moreover says that this Porphyry Chair was in his time to be seen in the Pope's Palace. He adds indeed that Platina thinks that this Tradition of Pope Joan was not faithfully delivered to Posterity. But however (says he) such a Tradition there is concerning the first Practical Tradition. Platina says that he may not deny it. For the second, he thinks the Chair rather design'd for a Stool for another Use, &c. He concludes, These things which I have related are commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obscure Authors: Therefore I resolved (says he) briefly and nakedly to set them down, lest I should seem too obstinately and pertinaciously to have omitted that which almost all affirm. It is no Wonder that he says the Authors of this Report were uncertain and obscure, since so very few writ any thing in that Age. But suppose none had writ of it, so long as he acknowledges it to have been a general Oral Tradition attested by a solemn and constant Practice, it has (according to Mr. S's Principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred Books written in that very Age. So that here's an Oral and Practical Tradition, continued we are sure for some hundreds of Years, preserved and propagated by a solemn Practice of the Popes, Clergy and People of Rome in their Processions, and by a notorious Custom at the Election of every Pope; and in a matter of so great Importance to their Religion (the honour of the See of Rome, and the uninterrupted Succession from St. Peter being so nearly concerned in it) that, had it been false, they had been obliged under pain of Damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have used all Means to have discovered the Falsity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound by his own Principles either to allow it for a Truth, or else to give an Account when and how it began; which may possibly be made out by *We Metaphysicians* (as he † styles himself, and his Scientific Brethren) but I assure him it is past the skill of † Book Learning.

† Ennead. 9.
L. 1.

† P. 340.
† P. 337.

S E C T. X.

The fourth
Answer to
his second
Demonstrati-
on.
* Decret.
primum
quartæ Sess.

§. 1. **I**T is not the present Perswasion of the Church of Rome, nor ever was, that their Faith hath descended to them by *Oral Tradition* as the sole *Rule* of it. And this being proved, the *Supposition* upon which his *Demonstration* is built falls to the Ground.

And for the Proof of this, I appeal to that * *Decree* of the Council of Trent, in which they declare, That because the *Christian Faith and Discipline* are contained in written Books and unwritten Traditions, &c. therefore they do receive and honour the Books of Scripture and also Tradition [pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia] with equal pious Affection and Reverence; which I understand not how those do, who set aside the Scripture, and make Tradition the sole Rule of their Faith. And consonantly to this *Decree*, the general Doctrine of the Romish Church is, that Scripture and Tradition make up the Rule of Faith. So the Roman Catechism (set forth by order of the Council of Trent) says, † that the sum of the Doctrine delivered to the Faithful is contained in the Word of God, which is distributed into Scripture and Tradition. Bellarmine † speaks to the same purpose, That the Scripture is a Rule of Faith, not an entire but partial one. The entire Rule is the Word of God, which is divided into two partial Rules, Scripture, and Tradition. According to this, the adequate Rule of Faith is the Word of God; which is contained partly in Scripture, and partly in the Tradition of the Church. And that Scripture is look'd upon by them as the principal Rule and primary Foundation of their Faith, and Tradition as only supplying the defects of Scripture, as to some Doctrines and Rites not contained in Scripture, must be evident to any one that has been conversant in the chief of their controversial Divines. Bellarmine † where he gives the Marks of a Divine Tradition speaks to this purpose, That that which they call a Divine Tradition is such a Doctrine or Rite as is not found in Scripture, but embraced by the whole Church; and for that reason believed to have descended from the Apostles. And he tells us farther †, That the Apostles committed all to writing which was commonly and publicly Preached; and that all things are in Scripture, which Men are bound to know and believe explicitly: But then he says, that there were other things which the Apostles did not commonly and publicly teach; and these they did not commit to Writing, but delivered them only by Word of Mouth to the Prelates and Priests and perfect Men of the Church. And these are the Apostolical Traditions he speaks of. Cardinal Perron † says, That the Scripture is the foundation of the Christian Doctrine, either mediately or immediately. And that the Authority of unwritten Tradition is founded in general on these sentences of the Apostle, † Hold the Traditions, &c. Again, * The things which thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses commit to faithful Men, &c. And that the Authority of the Church to preserve, and especially to declare these, is founded in this Proposition, viz. † That the Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth. So that according to him, the primary Rule of Faith is the Scripture, in which the Authority of Tradition is founded. Mr. Knott * says expressly, We acknowledge the Holy Scripture to be a most perfect Rule, for as much as a Writing can be a Rule; we only deny that it excludes, either Divine Tradition, though it be unwritten, or an external Judge to keep, to propose, to interpret it, &c. So that (according to him) Scripture is a perfect Rule, only it does not exclude unwritten Tradition, &c. By which that he does not understand (as Mr. S. does)

† In præfat.

† De Verbo
Dei, &c. l. 4.
12.

† De Verbo
Dei non
scripto. l. 4.
c. 9.

† Ibid c. 11.

† Reply. Ob-
servat. 3. c. 4.

† 2 Theff. 2.
15.

* 2 Tim. 2. 2.

† 1 Tim. 3. 15.

* Charity
maintained.
c. 2. Sect. 1.

a con-

a concurrent *Oral Tradition* of all the same Doctrines which are contained in *Scripture*, but other Doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere*, *We do not distinguish Tradition from the written Word, because Tradition is not written by any, or in any Book or Writing; but because it is not written in the Scripture or Bible*; Bellarmine* also says the same. And as for the interpreting of *Scripture*, he tells us that this is not the Office of a *Rule*, but of a *Judge*.* *There is (says he) a great and plain distinction between a Judge and a Rule. For as in a Kingdom the Judge hath his Rule to follow, which are the received Laws and Customs; which are not fit or able to declare, and he Judges to themselves, but that Office must belong to a living Judge: So the Holy Scripture is and may be a Rule, but cannot be a Judge.* Here he makes the *Scripture* as much a *Rule* for matters of *Faith*, as the *Laws* of the *Land* are for *Civil* matters. And in his Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, he hath a Chapter of above 150 Pages, the Title whereof is, *Scripture is not the only Rule of Faith*; which (had he with Mr. S. believed *Oral Tradition* to be the sole *Rule of Faith*) had been as absurd as it would be to write a *Book* to prove that *Turks* are not the only *Christians* in the *World*. Mr. Cressy likewise (not very consistently to himself) lays down this Conclusion; * *The entire Rule of Faith is contained not only in Scripture, but likewise in unwritten Tradition.*

* Reply to Mr. Chillingworth, Sect. 179.
* De Verbo Dei, &c. L. 4. c. 2.
* Charity maintained. c. 2. Sect. 3.

* Exomol. c. 20.

§. 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Rushworth's new *Rule of Faith*. Therefore Mr. White says*, *They speak ill who teach that some things are known in the Church from Scripture, some by Tradition.* And Mr. Holden (in Opposition to those who make *Scripture* any part of the *Rule of Faith*) advances one of the most wild and uncharitable Positions that ever I yet met withal, viz.* *That if one should believe all the Articles of the Catholick Faith, &c. for this Reason because he thought they were all expressly revealed in Scripture, or implicitly contained so as they might be deduced from thence, and would not have believed them, had he not judged that they might be evinced from Scripture; yet this man could be no true Catholick: Because (as he tells us afterwards*) we must receive the Christian Doctrine as coming to us by Tradition; for only by this means (excluding the Scriptures) Christ hath appointed revealed Truths to be received and communicated.* In the mean time Cardinal Perron (unless he altered his mind) is in a sad case, who believed the *Authority of Tradition* it self for this reason, because it was founded in *Scripture*.

* Tabul. Suffrag. p. 96.

* Analyt. Fid. L. 1. c. 6.

* C. 8.

§. 3. And this fundamental difference about the *Rule of Faith*, between the generality of their *Divines* and Mr. S's small party, is fully acknowledged by the *Traditionists* themselves. Dr. Holden says*, *That their Divines who resolve Faith according to the common Opinion, do inevitably fall into that shameful Circle (of proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture by the Church, and the Infallibility of the Church back again by the Scripture) because they dare not build their Faith upon the natural evidence and certainty of Tradition.* So that Dr. Holden's way of resolving Faith, is different from the common Opinion of their *Divines*, which he says* *does not differ from the Opinion of those who resolve their Faith into the private Spirits; and this (according to Mr. White*) is the very way of the Calvinists, and of the absurdest Sects.* Nay, Mr. White says farther*, *That he will be content to suffer all the punishments that is due to*

* L. 1. c. 9.

* L. 1. c. 7.
* Exetaf. P. 70.

* Ibid.

B b b b b 2

Calumniators,

Calumniators, if the Roman Divines (he there speaks of) do not hold the same Rule of Faith with the Calvinists, and all the absurdest Sects. So that it seems that the Calvinists, &c. do not in their Rule of Faith differ from the Papists, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. &c. Now the Divines he there speaks of, are the Censors of Doctrines at Rome, according to whose advice his infallible Holiness and the Cardinals of the Inquisition do usually proceed in censuring of Doctrines. Concerning these Divines he goes on to expostulate in this manner; * Shall we endure these men to sit as Censors and Judges of Faith, who agree with Hereticks in the very first Principle which distinguishes Catholics from Hereticks? Again*, These are thy Gods O Rome! upon these thou dependest; whilst prating Ignorance triumphs in the Roman College. And he says the same likewise of the generality of their School-Divines, whom he calls Scepticks, because they do not own his Demonstrative way. Inasmuch that he tells us *, That few sound Parts are left uninfected with this Plague of Scepticism*; that this is an universal Gangrene*; that there are but few that go the way of Demonstration, and these are either wearied out, or else live retiredly, or despair of any remedy of these things. And indeed all along that Book he bemoans himself and his Traditional Brethren as a desolate and forlorn Party, who have Truth on their side, but want Company and Encouragement. So he tells us *, That the true scientific Divines dare not profess their knowledge, lest they should be exposed by the Sophisters of their Church to the derision and scorn, either of their Judges or of the People.

S. 4. So that upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. S's Demonstration proceeds upon a false Supposition. That it is the Persuasion of their present Church, that Tradition is the sole Rule of Faith. For there is no such matter; unless Mr. S. mean by their Church a few private Persons, who are look'd upon by those who have the chief power in their Church as Heretical: As we may reasonably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome against Mr. White; many of whose Books are there condemned*, as containing things manifestly Heretical, erroneous in the Faith, rash, scandalous, seditious, and false respectively, &c. And all this done, notwithstanding that the chief subject of those Books is the explication and defence of this most Catholick Principle, That Oral Tradition is the only Rule of Faith. To sum up then the whole business: If nothing be to be owned for Christian Doctrine (as the Traditionists say) but what is the general persuasion of those who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the Roman Catholick Church; then much less can this Principle (That Oral Tradition is the sole Rule of Faith) which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Christian Doctrine, be received as descended from Christ and his Apostles; since it is so far from being the general persuasion of that Church at the present, that it has been, and still is generally disowned. But Mr. White has a salvo for this. For although he grant *, That very many of their School-men maintain that Tradition is necessary only for some Points, not clearly expressed in Scripture, whence (he says) it seems to follow that they build not the whole Body of their Faith upon Tradition; yet he tells us there is a vast difference betwixt relying on Tradition, and saying or thinking we do so. Suppose there be; yet I hope that mens saying that they do not rely on Tradition as their only Rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any mans surmise to the contrary

trary is that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is in effect to say that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have that they do not. Besides, how is this Rule *self-evident to all, even to the Rude Vulgar as to its ruling Power* (as Mr. S. affirms it is) when the greatest part even of the *Learned* among them *think and say* that it is not the *only Rule*? But Mr. White endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a * *similitude*, which is to this Sense; As the *Scepticks* who deny this Principle, That *Contradictions cannot be true at once*, yet in their lives and civil actions proceed as if they owned it: So the *Schoolmen*, though they deny Tradition to be the only Rule of Faith, yet by resolving their Faith into the Church which owns this Principle, they do also in practice own it though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned *Papists* are just such *Catholicks* as the *Scepticks* are *Dogmatists*, that is a company of absurd People that confute their Principles by their Practice. According to this reasoning, I perceive the *Protestants* will prove as good *Catholicks* as any, for they do only *think and say* that Tradition is not the Rule of Faith; but that they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath past his words for them: For he assures us* (and we may rely upon a Man that writes nothing but Demonstration) that *if we look narrowly into the bottom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural method of Tradition to have unawares settled our Judgments concerning Faith; however when our other Concerns awake design in us, we protest against it, and seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to embrace and hold to the mere guidance of the Letter of Scripture.* So that in reality we are as good *Catholicks*, and as true holders to Tradition as any *Papists* of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts and in our settled judgment; however we have taken up an humour to protest against it, and may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to be Protestants.

* Ibid. p. 19.

* P. 30, & 31.

S. 5. Thus much may suffice to have spoken to his two great Arguments; or * as he (good man) unfortunately calls them *Demonstrations*; which yet to say truth are not properly his, but the Author of *Rushworth's Dialogues*, the main foundation of which Book is the substance of these Demonstrations. Only before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a passage of Mr. S's * wherein he tells his Readers that they are not obliged to bend their brains to study his Book with that severity as they would do an *Euclid*; meaning perhaps one of Mr. White's *Euclids*; for it does not appear by his way of Demonstration that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true *Euclid*, I suppose any one that hath tasted his Writings, will at the reading of Mr. S's unbend his brains without bidding, and smile to see himself so demurely discharged from a study so absurd and ridiculous.

* P. 173.

* P. 163.

SECT. XL

S. 1. I Should now take into consideration his Ninth Discourse, in which he pretends to open the incomparable strength of the Churches human Authority, and the Advantages which accrue to it by the supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost: But that there is nothing material in it, which hath not been answered already. Only I desire him to explain, how the supernatural Assistances of the Holy Ghost can (according to his Principles)

Concerning some other Advantages of Tradition, &c.

ples) add to our assurance of the certainty of Tradition. Because we can have no greater certainty of the supernatural Assistance of the Holy Ghost, than we have that there is an Holy Ghost, and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. S.) but by Tradition, which conveys this Doctrine to us. And if Tradition of it self can infallibly assure us that there are supernatural Assistances of the Holy Ghost, then a Man must know that Tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural Assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural Assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of Tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural Assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the Assistance of the Holy Ghost upon the certainty of Tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of Tradition to rely upon the Assistance of the Holy Ghost? As if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of Tradition, which unless Tradition be first supposed certain, is it self wholly uncertain.

* P. 165, &
166.

* P. 159.

§. 2. The Conclusion of this Ninth *Discourse* is somewhat Ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a *Man* he has made himself (with the help of *Rushworth's Dialogues*) or rather what his *Party* has made him by the Office they put upon him: For it seems (by his telling) * Mr. Cressy and the rest are ordained to cajole the *Fools*, leaving him the way of Reason and Principles; and that himself is chosen out to Demonstrate to the *Wise*, or those who judge of things per altissimas causas. In the discharge of which glorious Office, he declares that he intends no Confutation of those Authors which Mr. Cressy and others have meddled with: Yet if any will be so charitable as to judge he hath solidly confuted them, because he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all their Arguments, &c. he shall rejoyce and be thankful. That the * intelligent Reader (for he writes to none but such) may also rejoyce with him; I shall recite the whole passage, for it is thick of Demonstration, and as likely as any in his Book to have the altissimas causas contained in it.

* P. 23.

§. 3. * It would require a large Volume to unfold particularly how each virtue contributes to shew the inerrable indeficiency of Tradition, and how the Principles of almost each Science are concerned in demonstrating its Certainty: Arithmetick lends her Numbring and Multiplying Faculty, to scan the vast Number of Testifiers; Geometry her Proportions to shew a kind of infinite strength of Certitude in Christian Tradition, above these Attestations which breed Certainty in humane affairs; Logick her skill to frame and make us see the Connexions it has with the Principles of our Understanding; Nature her Laws of Motion and Action; Morality her first Principle that nothing is done gratis by a Cognoscitive Nature, and that the Body of Traditionary Doctrine is most conformable to Practical Reason: Historical Prudence clears the Impossibility of an undiscernable revolt from Points so descended and held so Sacred: Politicks shew this to be the best way imaginable to convey down such a Law as it concerns every man to be skilful in; Metaphysicks engages the Essences of Things, and the very notion of Being which fixes every Truth, so establishing the scientificall Knowledges which spring from each particular Nature by their first Causes or Reasons exempt from changes or motion. Divinity demonstrates it most worthy God, and most conducive to bring Mankind to Bliss. Lastly,

Lastly, Controverſie evidences the total uncertainty of any thing concerning Faith if this can be uncertain, and makes uſe of all the reſt to eſtabliſh the certainty of this Firſt Principle. A very fit concluſion for ſuch Demonſtrations as went before. It is well Mr. S. writes to none but intelligent Readers; for were it not a thouſand Pities, that ſo manly, and ſolid, and convincing a Diſcourſe as this ſhould be caſt away upon Fools?

S E C T. XII.

§. 1. **A**S for his *Corollaries*, ſuppoſing them to be rightly deduced from his former Diſcourſes, they muſt of neceſſity fall with them. For they ſignifie nothing but upon this ſuppoſition that his foregoing Diſcourſes are true. And yet this being granted, it were eaſie to ſhew that moſt of them are groſſly faulty. For *Fiſt*, Several of them are plainly coincident. The *ſecond*, viz. *None can with right pretend to be a Church, but the followers of Tradition*, is the very ſame in ſenſe with the 11th, viz. *No company of Men hang together like a Body of a Chriſtian Commonwealth or Church, but that which adheres to Tradition*. So likewiſe the 12th and 14th are contained in the 15th: The 16th and 17th in the 19th: The 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th in the 21ſt. And the 32d and 34th in the 31ſt. Secondly, Divers of them are manifeſtly abſurd, as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, the Sum of which is, That there is no arguing againſt Tradition from Scripture, or the Authority of the Church, or Fathers and Councils, or from Hiſtory and Teſtimonial Writings, or from contrary Tradition, or Reaſon, or any Inſtances whatſoever: which is as much as to ſay, If this Propoſition be true, That Tradition is certain, then it cannot by any kind of Argument be proved to be falſe. But is this any peculiar Conſectary from the truth of this Propoſition? Doth not the ſame follow from every Propoſition? That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be falſe; yet no Man was ever yet ſo frivolous, as to draw ſuch a conſequence from the ſuppoſed Truth of any Propoſition. His 23d alſo is ſingularly abſurd, That there is no poſſibility of arguing at all againſt Tradition rightly underſtood, or the living Voice of the Catholick Church, with any ſhew of Reaſon. Theſe are large Words. It might have contented a reaſonable Man to have ſaid, that no good Argument could be brought againſt it: But he is jealous of his Hypotheſis, and can never think it ſafe till it be ſhot-free; nor will that content him, but it muſt be alſo impoſſible for any one to make a ſhew of ſhooting at it. This were, I confeſs, a peculiar Privilege of Mr. S's Diſcourſes above other Mens, if they were (as he ſays) by Evidence of Demonſtration ſo ſecured, that not only no ſubſtantial Argument could be brought againſt them, but that even the moſt ſubtil Schoolman of them all ſhould not be able to come near them with ſo much as a *videtur quod non*. But it may be he means no more by this Corollary, than what he ſaid in the 18th, viz. *That no ſolid Argument from Reaſon can be brought againſt Tradition*: If ſo, then the ſenſe of his 23d Corollary muſt be this, That there is no poſſibility of arguing at all againſt Tradition with any ſolid ſhew, or ſubſtantial ſhadow of Reaſon; which would be a little inconvenient. I will inſtance but in one more, his 40th which is this, *The knowledge of Traditions Certainty is the firſt knowledge or Principle in Controverſial Divinity; i. e. without which nothing is known or knowable in that Science*. Which is to infer, that becauſe he hath with much pains

Mr. S's Corollaries conſidered.

pains proved the certainty of Tradition, therefore it is *self-evident*, i. e. needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the present matter in Controversie and that which is the main debate of his *Book* to be the *first Principle* in Controversial Divinity, i. e. such a Proposition as every one ought to grant before he can have any Right to dispute about it. This is a very prudent Course, to make *begging the Question* the *first Principle in Controversie*; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his Mind that the *Method* he takes would be the best way to make *Controversie* a *Science*; because he that should have the luck or boldness to beg first, would have it in his power to make what he pleased certain.

† P. 330.

§. 2. Were it worth while, I might farther pursue the Absurdities of his *Corollaries*. For they are not so terrible as he makes shew of, by his telling Dr. Casaubon † That *Sure-footing and its Corollaries may put him out of his Wits*: Which though intended for an Affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good Interpretation; for if the reading of wild and phantastical Stuff be apt to disorder a very learned Head, then so far Mr. S's saying may have Truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 41 *Corol.* not with an equal Number, but with two or three natural *Confectaries* from the Doctrine of his Book.

First, No Man can certainly understand the meaning of any Book whatsoever, any farther than the Contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent *Oral Tradition*. For the Arguments whereby he and Mr. Rushworth endeavour to prove it impossible without *Tradition* to attain to the certain Sense of Scripture, do equally extend to all other Books.

Secondly, The Memory of Matters of Fact done long ago may be better preserved by *general Rumour* than by publick *Records*. For this is the plain English of that Assertion, That *Oral Tradition* is a better and more secure Way of Conveyance than Writing.

Thirdly, That the Generality of Papists are no Christians: For if (as he affirms) Tradition be the sole Rule of Faith, and those who disown this Rule be *ipso facto* cut off from the Root of Faith, i. e. unchristian'd; And if (as I have shewn) the Generality of Papists do disown this Rule: Then it is plain that they are no Christians.

THE

T H E
R U L E
O F
F A I T H.

P A R T IV.

Testimonies concerning the Rule of Faith.

S E C T. I.

§. 1. **T**HUS far in the way of Reason and Principles. The rest is Mr. S's Testi-
Note-book Learning, which he tells us † he is not much a monies exa-
Friend to; and there is no kindness lost, for it is as little a mined.
 Friend to him and his Cause as he can be to it. I shall first examine the † P. 337.
Authorities he brings for Tradition; and then produce express Testimonies
 in behalf of Scripture. In both which I shall be very brief; in the one,
 because his Testimonies require no long Answer; in the other, because
 it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many Fathers, who
 for ought appears by his Book, is acquainted with none but Father White,
 as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for
 the Course he uses to take with other Mens Testimonies, because it is
 the only Way that a Man in his Circumstances can take; otherwise,
 nothing can be in it self more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer
 Testimonies by ranking them under so many faulty Heads; and having
 so done Magisterially to require his Adversary to vindicate them, by
 shewing that they do not fall under some of those Heads, though he have
 not said one Word against any of them particularly; nay, though he
 have not so much as recited any one of them; for then the Trick would
 be spoiled, and his Catholick Reader who perhaps may believe him in
 the general, might see Reason not to do so if he should descend to particu-
 lars, which (as he well observes) would make his † Discourse to look with † P. 161.
 a contingent Face.

§. 2. I begin with his three Authorities from Scripture; which when
 I consider, I see no Reason why he (of all Men) should find fault with
 Cccce my

† P. 320 my Lord Bishop of Down's *Dissuasive* for being so † *thin and slight in Scripture-Citations*. Nor do I see how he will answer it to Mr. Rushworth, for transgressing that prudent *Rule* of his, viz. † *That the Catholick should never undertake to convince his Adversary out of Scripture, &c.* For which he gives this substantial Reason, * because *this were to strengthen his Opponent in his own Ground and Principle, viz. That all is to be proved out of Scripture*; which he tells us presently after is no more fit to convince, than a *Beetle is to cut withal*; meaning it perhaps of Texts so applied as these which follow. † *This shall be to you a direct way, so that Fools cannot Err in it.* † *This is my Covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit which is in thee, and my Words which I have put in thy Mouth shall not depart from thy Mouth, and from the Mouth of thy Seed, and from the Mouth of thy Seeds Seed from henceforth for ever.* † *I will give my Law in their Bowels, and in their Hearts will I write it*: From which Texts if Mr. S. can prove *Tradition to be the only Rule of Faith*, any better than the *Philosophers Stone* or the *Longitude* may be proved from the 1st Chap. of *Genesis*, I am content they should pass for valid Testimonies: Though I might require of him (by his own Law) before these Texts can signify any thing to his purpose, to demonstrate that this is the *Traditionary Sense* of these Texts, and that it hath been universally in all Ages received by the Church under that Notion; and then to shew how it comes to pass that so many of the *Fathers*, and of their own *Commentators* have interpreted them to another Sense: And lastly, to shew how *Scripture* which has no certain Sense but from *Tradition*, and of the Sense whereof *Tradition* cannot assure us unless it be the *Rule of Faith*; I say, how *Scripture* can prove *Tradition to be the Rule of Faith*, which can prove nothing at all unless *Tradition* be first proved to be the *Rule of Faith*, This I take to be as *shameful a Circle*, as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his Brethren.

† 39. §. 3. I proceed to his *Authorities* from *Fathers* and *Councils*; all which (not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. White's *Tabula Suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not consulted the Books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their Faults, and with the very same Errours of Citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that though he is pleas'd to say of himself that † *he is a bad Transcriber*, yet I must do him that right, to assure the Reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

§. 4. He begins with *Councils*, of which he tells us *he will only mention three in several Ages*.

The first is the *First Synod of Lateran*. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several Ages, he should have produced them according to the Order of time, and have begun with the Council of *Sardica*, which was near 300 Years before the *Lateran*. But there was a good reason why the *Lateran* should be first produced, viz. because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's Book. Well, but what says this Synod? *We all confess unanimously and consequently, with one heart and mouth, the Tenets and sayings of the Holy Fathers; adding nothing, subtracting nothing of those things which are delivered us by them; and we believe as the Fathers have believed, we preach so as they have taught.* The force of which Testimony Mr

Mr. S. lays upon the Word *delivered*, as if that Word where ever it is met with in *Councils* or *Fathers*, must needs be understood of *oral delivery*; whereas it is a general Word indifferently used for conveyance either by *writing* or *word of mouth*. In this place it plainly refers to the *writings* of particular *Fathers*, out of whom a long catalogue of Testimonies against the Heresy of the *Monothelites* had been read just before this Declaration of the Synod. Now what signifies this to *Oral Tradition's* being the *Rule of Faith*, that this Synod declares her Faith, in opposition to the Heresy of the *Monothelites*, to be consonant in all things to those Testimonies which had been produced out of the *Fathers*?

The next is the *Council of Sardica*; out of an *Epistle* of which *Council* he cites these words, *We have received this Doctrine, we have been taught so, we hold this Catholick Tradition, Faith and Confession*. Which are general words, and differently applicable to *Oral Tradition*, or *Writing*, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this Council was rejected by St. *Austin* and other Orthodox *Fathers*, as * *Binius* acknowledges; and which is more, that the latter part of this *Epistle* (out of which part Mr. S. cites these words) which contains a *Confession of Faith*, is by * *Baronius* (and after him by *Binius*) proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in *Theodoret*, and mentioned by *Sozomen*; yet *Baronius* thinks that it was the *Arian Confession* composed by the false *Synod* of *Sardica* which sate at the same time; and that *Sozomen* lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the *Confession* of the Orthodox *Synod* of the same name. However that be, he proves out of *Athanasius*, and from the Testimony both of the Eastern, and Western Bishops, that the Council of *Sardica* did not so much as add one word or tittle, no nor so much as explain any thing in the *Nicene Faith*. But Mr. *White* says nothing of this, and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no *Speculator* in these matters, but only as a *Testifier* delivers down these Authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. *White*; and if the word *Tradition* be but in them, they are *Demonstrative*.

* Concil.

Tom. 1.

* An. 347.

As for his Testimonies from the 2d Council of *Nice* (which he calls the 7th General Council) who pretended their Doctrine of *Image-worship* to have descended to them by an *uninterrupted Tradition*, and proved it most doughtily by Texts of Scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit Authors, and by fond and immodest Stories (as is acknowledged by Pope * *Adrian* the 6th) of Apparitions and Womens Dreams, &c. for which I refer the Reader to the Council it self; which is such a mess of Fopperies, that if a general Council of Atheists had met together with a design to abuse Religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I say, as for his Testimonies from this Council, I shall refer Mr. S. to that Western Council under *Charles the Great*, which a little after at *Franckfort* condemned, and also fully confuted the Decisions of this Council, calling their pretended *Tradition of Image-worship* [putidissimam Traditionem] a most stinking Tradition.

* Quodlibet 6. cited by Espenham in 2d Epist. ad Tim. c. 4.

These are his Authorities from Councils; Where (says he) we see General Councils relying on the Teaching of the Fathers or fore-going Church, and on the Churches Tradition as their Rule, &c. Where does he see, any such matter? Or where does he see General Councils? Was the Council of *Lateran* a General one? Or was the Council of *Sardica*? If it was let

him shew how the 2^d of Nice could be the *Seventh General Council*. Mr. White must write more explicitly, and say which are *General Councils*, which not, otherwise he will lead his Friends into dangerous Mistakes.

§. 4. *After Ancient Councils* (not so ancient neither) *let us* (says he) *give a glance at Fathers*. Glance is a modest word, and yet I doubt whether ever the *Fathers* had so much as that from him. Before I speak particularly to his Testimonies from the *Fathers*, I shall mind him of what Mr. Rushworth says in general, viz. * *That he who seeks Tradition in the Fathers, and to evince it by their Testimony, takes an hard task upon him, &c.* Again *, *As in other Points, so even in this of the Resolution of Faith, as Doctors seem to differ now-a-days, so might the Fathers also.* If this be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few Testimonies out of the *Fathers* to prove that *Tradition* is the sole *Rule of Faith*. But let us see what he has done towards it.

He begins with a saying of Pope Celestine to the Fathers of the *Ephesian Council*. Now therefore we must act with a common endeavour to preserve things believed, and retained to this very time by succession from the *Apostles*. Binius's other Reading [of διδοχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite spoils the force of this Citation which Mr. S. puts upon the word *Succession*. But read it how he will; why may not the Christian Doctrine be said to come by *Succession from the Apostles*, when it is transmitted to us by Scripture, as well as when by *Oral Tradition*? I am sure the same Celestine in an *Epistle* to Cyril, commends him for defending the Faith by Scripture, This (says he) is a great *Triumph of our Faith, to demonstrate our Opinions so strongly, and to overthrow the contrary by Testimonies from Scripture*. And neither in this *Epistle*, nor the other, does he make any mention of *Oral Tradition*.

Next he cites that known place in *Irenæus*: But what if the *Apostles* had not left us the *Scriptures*, ought we not to follow the *Order of Tradition*, &c.? This makes clearly against him; for it implies, that now the *Apostles* have left us the *Scriptures*, we ought to follow them. The other passage he cites out of *Irenæus*, *Lib. 1. c. 3.* is a clear eviſtion that he did not consult the Book. For he puts two sayings together which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other; and because Mr. White had cited *Lib. 1. c. 3.* for the first saying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an (*Et rursus*) *Again, &c.* Therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right *Traditionary* temper, which is to take things easily upon trust himself, and require Demonstration from others) concluded that these sayings were in the same place, though in truth they are in several Books. As for the Testimony it self, there is nothing in it to Mr. S's purpose besides the word *Tradition*, which *Irenæus* does often apply to Scripture as well as *Oral Tradition*; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to *Oral Tradition*.

His Testimonies out of *Origen* will do him less stead: For every one that hath been conversant in the Writings of that *Father*, knows what he means by the *Churches Tradition* preserved by order of *Succession*, viz. The mystical Interpretations of Scripture, which (he says) were delivered by the *Apostles* to the *Governors of the Church*, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the *Tradition* Mr. S. contends for, *Origen* is at his service; if it be not, I assure him he is not for his turn.

Next

* Dial. 3.
Sect. 13.

* Ibid.

Next comes *Tertullian*, concerning whom (as also *Origen*) the Papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply in *St. Hierom's* Words *, *As for* * Advers. Helvid. *Tertullian, I have nothing to say of him but that he is not a Man of the Church.* Whatever he was, these are his words, *If thou beest but a Christian, believe what is [traditum] delivered.* And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have said) is indifferent to *Written* or *Oral Tradition*, if the Circumstances do not determine it to one; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. S.) to the *Scripture*. For he disputes here against *Marcion*, who denied the *Flesh of Christ*; and who to maintain that, denied his *Nativity*, and * expunged the whole History of it out of the *Gospel*; But (saith *Tertullian*) *by what authority dost thou this? If thou be a Prophet, foretell something; If an Apostle, preach publickly; If Apostolical, be of the Apostles mind; If no more but a Christian, believe what is delivered.* And where delivered? But in those *Instruments* or *Books* of the *Gospel*, out of which (as *Tertullian* immediately before tells us) *Marcion* had made bold to expunge this Story.

* His opinor consiliis tot Originalia Instrumenta Christi delere Marcion ausus est, ne Caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, &c.

As for his Testimonies out of *Athanasius*, the two first of them prove nothing but that *Faith comes down from our Ancestors*, or was by them *delivered to us*; which no Body denies: Nor is there a word in either of them concerning *Oral*, in opposition to *written Tradition*. The third Testimony is out of an Epistle to *Epictetus*, to whom *Athanasius* writing concerning those who held *Christ's Body* to be *Consubstantial* with his Divinity, tells him this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general the *Orthodox Church was not of that mind, our Fathers did not think so.* From whence Mr. S. infers that *Tradition is held by him a sole sufficient Rule of Faith, and the only Answer to be given why we reject Points from Faith, &c.* But if he had consulted the Book, he would not have inferred that this was the *only Answer to be given, &c.* For it immediately follows, *But lest from our being wholly silent, the Inventers of evil things should take occasion to be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few Passages out of Scripture, &c.* And from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an Error that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular Arguments out of Scripture against it, to say that it was contrary to the ancient Faith; but yet lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it, therefore he confutes it from particular Texts of Scripture. And what in his Opinion was the *sufficient Rule of Faith*, Mr. S. might have seen at the beginning of this Epistle from these words, *That Faith which was professed by the Fathers in that Council (viz. the Nicene) according to the Scriptures, is to me sufficient, &c.* It seems that Scripture was to him the Rule and Standard whereby to judge even the *Creeds* of General Councils.

Mr. S. says he will be shorter in the rest, and so will I. For what is to be said to Testimonies brought at a venture? when he that brings them, had he read the Books themselves, could not have had the face to have brought them. Such is this out of * *Clem. Alexand.* *As if one of* * Stromat. L. 7. *a Man becomes a Beast, like those infected with Circe's poyson; so he hath forfeited his being a Man of God and faithful to our Lord, who spurns against Ecclesiastical Tradition, and leaps into Opinions of humane Election.* Mr. S. knows whose way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midst of a Text that sounds something towards his purpose, and leave out the rest which

which would make it evident to be meant just contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whose implicit Faith were it not for his culpable Ignorance might excuse him. But for his Seducer Mr. *White*, how he can acquit himself of so foul an Imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous Papist to judge when I have nakedly set the whole Passage before him. *Clement* speaking of Hereticks who relinquish the Scripture, or abuse it by wresting it to their Lusts, says, *Men who deal in matters of highest importance must need commit great Errors, if they do not take and hold the RULE OF FAITH from Truth it self. For such Men having once deviated from the right way, do likewise err in most Particulars; probably because they have not the Faculty of distinguishing Truths and Falshoods perfectly exercised to chuse what ought to be chosen. For if they had this, they would be ruled by the Divine SCRIPTURES, [Therefore as if any of Mankind should become a Beast, in such sort as those who* were * bewitched by Circe; even so he hath lost his being a Man of God and abiding faithful to the Lord, who hath spurned against the Tradition of the Church, and skipt into the Opinions of humane Sects †,] (not of humane Election, as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. *White* does most absurdly translate it) but he that hath returned from his Errors, and hearkened to the SCRIPTURES, and conformed his Life to the Truth, is as it were advanced from a Man to a God. At the same rate he goes on for several Pages together, taking the Scriptures for an *indemonstrable Principle*, from which all Divine Doctrines are to be demonstrated, and for the *Criterion* whereby they are to be tried; and charges the Hereticks in such words as we cannot find fitter for our Adversaries, As (says he) *naughty Boys shut out their School-master, so these drive the Prophecies out of the Church, suspecting that they will chide and admonish them; and they patch together abundance of falshoods and fictions, that they may seem RATIONALLY not to admit the Scriptures.* Again, speaking of these Hereticks affronting the Scriptures, he tells us *they oppose the * Divine Tradition with humane Doctrines † by other Traditions [delivered from hand to hand] that they may establish a Sect or Herefie.* Again he says, *they adulterate the Truth, and steal the Rule of Faith, &c. but for O R A L Frauds they shall have WRITTEN Punishments.* But enough of this; whosoever desires to see more of it, let him read on where these Men to their own shame have directed us, and see whether any Protestant can speak more fully and plainly in this Controversie. The whole trust of the Papists is upon the equivocal sense of the word *Tradition*. Which word is commonly used by the *Fathers* to signifie to us the Scripture or *Divine Tradition* as *Clement* here calls it; but the *Papists* understand it of their *unwritten Tradition*, and to this they apply all those Passages in the *Fathers* where *Tradition* is honourably mentioned. So Mr. *L.* deals with us in the Testimonies I have already examined: And there is nothing of argument in those few which remain but from the ambiguity of this Word; which I need not shew of every one of them in particular, for whosoever shall read them with this Key will find that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

S. 5. As for his Citations out of the Council of *Trent*, by which he would prove it to be the perswasion of their present Church, that *Tradition* is the sole *Rule of Faith*; I have already shewn that that Council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own *Writers*. And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an &c. those

* παρμαχου-
σιν.

† αἱρεσίων.

* διὰ παλαι-
νότητα.
† διὰ ἑτέρας
παρμαχου-
σιν.

those choaking Words, in which the Council declares it self to receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the Books of Scripture and unwritten Traditions. And after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful Account is it that he at last gives of that Council's putting Scripture constantly before Tradition, because Scripture being interpreted by Tradition, is of the same Authority as if an Apostle or Evangelist were present, and therefore no wonder they honour Scripture-Testimony so as to put it before Tradition; which is to say, that because Scripture is Subordinate to Tradition and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if Scripture and Tradition be but several Ways of conveying the Evangelical and Apostolical Doctrine, why should he imagine an Evangelist or Apostle to be more present by the Scripture than by Oral Tradition? Especially if it be considered, that he supposes Scripture to be an uncertain, and Tradition an infallible way of conveying this Doctrine.

S E C T. II.

§. 1. **A**LL that now remains, is to confirm the precedent Discourse by Testimonies of the most eminent Persons of the Church, in several Ages, in which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by that full Account which is given, of the Sense of the Ancients in this Matter in the Answer to *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*; which Mr. S. may if he please consult for his farther Conviction.

§. 2. I begin with the Historical Account which Eusebius gives of committing the Gospel to Writing; which is to this purpose, viz. * That * *the Romans were not content with the Doctrine Preached, unless it were also committed to Writing; and therefore did earnestly beg of Mark, Peter's Companion, that he would leave them a Monument in Writing of that Doctrine which had been delivered to them by Word of Mouth. And this was the occasion of the Writing of St. Mark's Gospel. And when Peter did understand that this Work was publish'd (being suggested by the Divine Revelation of the Holy Spirit) it is said he was very much pleased with the ready and earnest desire of those Persons; and that by his Authority he confirmed this Writing, to the end that it might be every where read in the Church. As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us †, That of all the Disciples they two only have left Monuments in Writing; of whom it is also reported they betook themselves to Write, being drawn thereto by Necessity. Matthew after he had Preached the Word of God to the Jews, and was resolved to go to other Nations, wrote his Gospel in the Language of his Country; and thus by the Diligence and Pains of Writing, did abundantly supply the want of his Presence to those whom he left. And when Mark and Luke had publish'd their Gospel, it is reported that John (who had always used to preach the Word without Writing it) being at length wrought upon by the same Reason did betake himself to write. From this Account it is clear, that the Apostles thought it necessary for the preservation and secure Conveyance of the Christian Doctrine, that it should be put into Writing; and that they judged this a better Way to supply the want of their Presence, than Oral Tradition. Therefore the same Author tells us † ' That the Disciples, who immediately succeeded the Apostles, as they travelled to Preach the Gospel to those who had not yet heard the Word of Faith, did with great Care also deliver to them the Writings of the Holy Evangelists. Again †, That Ignatius as he travelled towards Rome (where*

† Testimonies on the behalf of Scripture.

* Histor. Eccl. l. 2. c. 14.

† Ibid. l. 3. c. 18.

† Ib. c. 31.

† Ib. c. 30.

(where he was to suffer) exhorted the Churches of every City to hold fast the Tradition of the Apostles; which (as also by Writing he testified) for greater Security he held necessary to be copied in Writing.

* Ibid. L. 5.
c. 27.

§. 3. That the Hereticks of Old made the same Pretence which the Papists make now, of Oral Tradition in opposition to Scripture, the same Eusebius tells us; and withal, that Books are a sufficient Contutation of this Pretence*. Those (says he) who were of the Heresie of Artemon, said that all their Fore-Fathers and the Apostles themselves had received and taught the same things which they also did; and had preserved the true Teaching unto the time of Victor Bishop of Rome, whose Successour Zephyrinus corrupted it. And this (saith he) would have great probability, were it not first of all contradicted by the Scripture; and next if there did not remain the Writings of other Brethren much more Ancient than Victor's Time, &c. in the Books of all whom Christ's Divinity is acknowledged. And afterwards he tells us that these Hereticks did change and corrupt the Scriptures to bring them to their Opinions; so Mr. S. tells us that the outward Letter of Scripture ought to be corrected by Tradition and Sense written in Mens Hearts.

* Comment.
in Isa. c. 19,

St. Hierom also tells us*, That the Hereticks were wont to say, we are the Sons of the Wise, who did from the beginning deliver down to us the Apostolical Doctrine; but he adds, that the true Sons of Judah adhere to the Scripture.

* In 2 Thef.
c. 2, Hom. 4.

§. 4. That Scripture is sufficiently plain in all things necessary. St. Chrysostome*, All things in the Divine Scriptures are plain and streight. Whatsoever things are necessary are manifest.

* Epist. 3.

St. Austin having spoken of the profoundness of Scripture, adds*, Not that those things which are necessary to Salvation are so hard to be come at: But (saith he) when one hath there attained Faith without which there is no pious and right living, there are besides, many dark and mysterious things, &c.

* Ibid.

Again*, The manner of Speech in Scripture, how easie is it to all us, though few can penetrate to the bottom of it? Those things which it plainly contains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar Friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned. How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great Exception against Scripture? And what these things are, which are plainly contained in Scripture, the same Father tells us else-where in these Words*,

* De Doctr.
Christ. L. 2.
c. 9.

Among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, all those things are to be found which comprehend Faith and good Manners. The same St. Austin (as also Clement in the Book which Mr. White quoted) for the understanding of obscure Texts of Scripture directs us not to Tradition, but to the plain Text without which he expressly says*, there would be no way to understand them.

* De Unitat.
Eccles. c. 5.

St. Hierom also tells us*, That the Hereticks were wont to say, we are the Sons of the Wise, who did from the beginning deliver down to us the Apostolical Doctrine; but he adds, that the true Sons of Judah adhere to the Scripture.

§. 5. That Scripture is so plain, as to be fit to determine Controversies. Justin sure thought so, when disputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had Tradition on his side, he told him he would bring such Proofs (to the contrary) as no Man could gain-say: Attend (says he) to what I shall recite out of the Holy Scriptures, Proofs which need not to be explained, but only to be heard. Mr. White might have found likewise much to this purpose in his Clement.

But

But not to tire my Reader in a Point which the Ancients abound with, I shall only produce the judgment of *Constantine* * in that solemn *Oration* * *Theodoret.*
of his to the Council of *Nice*; wherein he bewails their *mutual opposi-* *Hist. L. 1. c. 7.*
ons, especially in Divine things; concerning which they had the *Doctrine*
of the Holy Spirit Recorded in Writing; For (says he) the *Books of the*
Evangelists and Apostles, and the Oracles of the Old Prophets, do evidently
teach us what we ought to think of the Divine Majesty. I therefore laying aside
all seditious Contention, let us determine the matters in question by Testimo-
nies out of the *Divine Writings*. Not a word of any other Tradition but
Scripture, which was held evident enough in those Days, though now
Mr. S. tells us it is not sufficient to decide that Controversie about the
Divinity of Christ.

§. 6. Lastly, That Scripture is the *Rule of Faith.*

Irenæus †, *The Method of our Salvation we have not known by any other* † L. 3. c. 1.
but those Men by whom the Gospel came to us, which then they Preached, but
afterwards by the Will of God delivered it to us in the Scriptures, to be for the
future the Foundation and Pillar of our Faith.

St. Cyprian the Church hath ever held a good Catholick; yet Mr. S. † † P. 314
takes notice that he erred in a Point of Faith, and perhaps the rather,
because Mr. *Rushworth* † had told him that he was not theirs in this Con- † Dial. 3.
troversie. For (says he) *St. Cyprian seems to think that the Resolution of* *Sect. 13.*
Faith was to be made into Scripture, and not into Tradition. But that we
may not seem to accept of this of Courtesie from him, nor yet wholly to
despise it, I shall offer this one Testimony instead of many out of that
Father; who being opposed with an Argument from Tradition, de-
mands †, *Whence have you that Tradition? Comes it from the Authority* † Epist. 74
of the Lord, and of the Gospel, or from the Epistles of the Apostles? For God
testifies that we are to do those things which are written, &c. If it be com-
manded in the Gospel, or contained in the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles,
then let us observe it as a Divine and Holy Tradition.

Hilary * commends *Constantius* the Emperor for regulating his Faith * *Ad Con-*
only according to those things which are written. And to oblige him to de- *stant.*
serve this Commendation, he adds; *he who refuseth this is Antichrist, and*
who dissembles in it is Anathema.

† *Optatus*, concerning the Controversie with the *Donatists*, asks who † Lib. 5. de
shall be Judge? and answers himself, *the Scriptures*: Which he illust- *Schism. Do-*
rates by the similitude of a Father who delivered his Will orally to his *nat.*
Children while he was living, but when he was dying, caused it to be
written in *lasting Tables*, to decide all Controversies that might happen
among them after his death. The Passage is large, and it is obvious to
apply it.

Basil maintaining the *Doxology* as it was used in his Days, says †, *Thus* † De Sp.
we received it from our Fathers; but adds immediately, *This is not enough* *Sancto c. 7.*
for us, that it is the Tradition of the Fathers, for they followed the Authori-
ty of the Scriptures, making its Testimonies the Principles upon which they built.
He has indeed in the same Book † a passage much insisted on by the *Papists* † C. 27.
concerning unwritten Traditions; but withal, he says those Traditions
were *secretly conveyed*, which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. S.

Chrysostome * having mentioned several Heresies, directs how they * *Hom. 8. in*
may be avoided, viz. By attending to the Faith delivered, and looking up- *Epist. ad Heb.*
on all that disagrees from that as *Adulterate*. For (says he) *as those who* c. 5.

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give Rules do not put Men upon a curious Inquiry after many Measures, but bid them keep to the Rule given; so is it in Opinions. But no Body will attend to the Scriptures; if we did, we should not only not fall into Errors ourselves, but also rescue those that are deceived. Again, † If we should be thoroughly conversant in the Scriptures, we should be instructed both in right Opinions and a good Life. Again, among the many Sects of Christians † it will be easy to judge of the Right, if we believe the Scriptures, because these are plain and true: If any one agree with these he is a Christian; if he contradicts them he is far from this Rule.

† Hom. 52.
in Joh.

† Hom. 33.
in Act.
Apost.

† De Bapt.
Dont. Donat.
l. 2. c. 6.

* Contr. Max.
l. 3.

* De Unit.
Ecclef. c. 16.

* Comment.
in Agg. c. 1.

† Paschal.
L. 3.
† L. 2.

* Heret. Fa-
bul. L. 5.

* Part. 1.
Confid. 2.

† De Distinct.
Verar. Viti-
on. a falsis.
† Serm. in
die Circum-
cis, &c.

† Prolog. de
Lib. Bib.
&c.

St. Austin calls the Scripture, † the Divine Ballance for the weighing of Doctrines. Again, the Holy Scripture (says he) fixeth the Rule of our Doctrine. And accordingly himself uses it both in his Dispute with Maximinus, to whom he says, † Neither ought I now to alledge the Nicene Council, nor thou that of Ariminum; for neither am I bound to the Authority of the one, nor thou of the other. Let us both contest with the Authorities of Scripture, which are Witnesses common to us both. And also against the Donatists in these Words, * Let them if they can demonstrate their Church not by the Talk or Rumours [or Oral Tradition] of the Africans, not by the Councils of their own Bishops, not by the Books of their Disputers, not by deceitful Miracles, &c. but by the Prescript of the Law, Prophets, &c. i. e. by all the Canonical Authorities of the Holy Books.

Hierom saith, * Of those things, which without the Authorities and Testimonies of the Scripture, Men invent of their own Heads as from Apostolical Tradition, they are smitten with the Sword of God.

Theophilus Alexander, whom Hierom hath Translated, calls Scripture more than once † the Rule, and the Testimonies of it the firm foundations of Doctrine. And again saith, †, It comes from a Demoniacal Spirit that Men follow the Sophisms of humane Minds, and think any thing Divine that wants the Authority of Scripture.

Theodoret * charges all Heresies upon the not following of Scripture, which he calls the inflexible Rule of Truth. Again, We have learned the Rule of Opinions from the Divine Scripture.

After the Fathers, I shall produce the Testimonies of two eminent Persons of latter Times, Gerson and Lyra.

Gerson in his * Book of the Tryal of Doctrines, hath this remarkable Passage; In the Tryal of Doctrines, that which is first and principally to be considered, is, Whether a Doctrine be conformable to the Holy Scripture, &c. The reason of this is, because the Scripture is deliver'd to us as a SUFFICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE for the Government of the whole Ecclesiastical Body and its Members to the end of the World. So that it is such an Art, such a Rule or Exemplar, that any other Doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to be renounc'd as Heretical, or to be accounted suspicious, or not at all appertaining to Religion. Again, † It is evident how pernicious the rejection of the Holy Scripture is, and how certain a preparatory for the reception of Antichrist. Once more, † What Mischief, what Danger, what Confusion hath happened through Contempt of the Holy Scripture, which sure is sufficient for the Government of the Church (else Christ must have been an imperfect Law-giver) let us ask, Experience, &c.

Lyra also writes thus †; As in Philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing things to their first and self-evident Principles; so in the Writings delivered by the Holy Doctors, Truth is discovered as to matters of Faith, by reducing them to the Canonical Scriptures.

Sir,

Sir, You know how easie it were to swell up a large Volume, with Testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr. White does, to hale in Quotations though never so impertinent; or use the wretched Importunity which Mr. S. does to perswade them to be pertinent. But these Testimonies which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfy an unpassionate Reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own Eyes and Reason. As for that sort of Men which chuse to follow Noise rather than Light, we must be content to leave them to the blind Conduct of those Guides, who having no better Means to keep their Followers to them, go Halloing in the Dark, and fill their Ears with the Insignificant Sounds of Infallibility, Indefectibility, Self-evidence and Demonstration.

Concerning the Appendix wherein you are particularly challeng'd, I hope for an Account very shortly, and so take leave.

Sir,

Your Affectionate

Friend,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

A N

[illegible]

YOUNG & RUBIN

FOR THE TILLER

MA

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